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ANCIENT AND MODERN

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ESSAYS  
ANCIENT & MODERN

by  
T.S.ELIOT

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## PREFACE

A volume of essays entitled *For Lancelot Andrewes* has gone out of print, after some eight years, and a new edition was proposed. I have taken the opportunity of changing the title, which had served its turn, of omitting the preface, which had more than served its turn, and of omitting two papers with which I was dissatisfied, on Machiavelli and on Crashaw. And as the essay on Thomas Middleton is now included in another collection called *Elizabethan Essays*, there was no point in including that either. On the other hand I have added five essays not previously collected: 'Religion and Literature', 'Catholicism and International Order', 'The *Pensées* of Pascal', 'Modern Education and the Classics', and 'In Memoriam'.

I renew my acknowledgment of obligation to the Editors of *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Theology*, *The Dial* (New York), and *The Forum* (New York) on account of essays which appeared in the earlier

## PREFACE

volume. 'Religion and Literature' was originally given as one of a series of addresses arranged in 1934 by the Rev. V. A. Demant and published together as a volume called *Faith that Illuminates* (The Centenary Press). 'Catholicism and International Order' was an address delivered to the Anglo-Catholic Summer School of Sociology at Oxford in 1933, and was printed in *Christendom*. 'The *Pensées* of Pascal' appears as the Introduction to the English translation of that work published in the *Everyman Library*. 'Modern Education and the Classics' is the revision of an address delivered to the Classical Club of Harvard University in 1933, and hitherto unprinted. *In Memoriam* is the expanded version of an Introduction written for the Nelson Classics edition of 'Poems of Tennyson'. To the several editors and publishers I wish to make grateful acknowledgment.

I am aware that most of these papers date themselves, even when I have forgotten the dates. It may well be that in a few years' time I may wish to remove some from currency, as I have in the past; but I may remark that nothing that has happened in more recent times has caused me to wish to modify in a more favourable sense my comments on the League of Nations in 'Catholicism and International Order'. The note on Baudelaire antedates the longer paper printed in my *Selected Essays*, and 'our time'

## PREFACE

is perhaps over: nevertheless the note seemed to me worth preserving for the present. I observe that the advertisement of *For Lancelot Andrewes* advanced the claim that the essays had 'a unity of their own'. I do not know whether my ideals of unity are higher, or merely my pretensions more modest, than eight years ago; I offer this book, as the title implies, only as a miscellaneous collection, having no greater unity than that of having been written by the same person.

T.S.E.

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## CONTENTS

/	
LANCELOT ANDREWES	<i>page</i> 11
JOHN BRAMHALL	31
FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY	45
BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME	63
THE HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT	77
RELIGION AND LITERATURE	93
CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER	113
THE PENSEES OF PASCAL	137
MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS	161
IN MEMORIAM	175



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## LANCELOT ANDREWES

**T**he Right Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Bishop of Winchester, died on September 25th, 1626. During his lifetime he enjoyed a distinguished reputation for the excellence of his sermons, for the conduct of his diocese, for his ability in controversy displayed against Cardinal Bellarmine, and for the decorum and devotion of his private life. Some years after Andrewes's death, Lord Clarendon, in his *History of the Rebellion*, expressed regret that Andrewes had not been chosen instead of Abbott to the Archbishopric of Canterbury, for thus affairs in England might have taken a different course. By authorities on the history of the English Church Andrewes is still accorded a high, perhaps the highest, place; among persons interested in devotion his 'Private Prayers' are not unknown. But among those persons who read sermons, if they read them at all, as specimens of English prose, Andrewes is little known. His sermons are

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

too well built to be readily quotable; they stick too closely to the point to be entertaining. Yet they rank with the finest English prose of their time, of any time. Before attempting to remove the remains of his reputation to a last resting place in the dreary cemetery of literature, it is desirable to remind the reader of Andrewes's position in history.

The Church of England is the creation not of the reign of Henry VIII or of the reign of Edward VI, but of the reign of Elizabeth. The *via media* which is the spirit of Anglicanism was the spirit of Elizabeth in all things; the last of the humble Welsh family of Tudor was the first and most complete incarnation of English policy. The taste or sensibility of Elizabeth, developed by her intuitive knowledge of the right policy for the hour and her ability to choose the right men to carry out that policy, determined the future of the English Church. In its persistence in finding a mean between Papacy and Presbytery the English Church under Elizabeth became something representative of the finest spirit of England of the time. It came to reflect not only the personality of Elizabeth herself, but the best community of her subjects of every rank. Other religious impulses, of varying degrees of spiritual value, were to assert themselves with greater vehemence during the next two reigns. But the Church at the end of the reign of Elizabeth, and

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

as developed in certain directions under the next reign, was a masterpiece of ecclesiastical statesmanship. The same authority that made use of Gresham, and of Walsingham, and of Cecil, appointed Parker to the Archbishopric of Canterbury; the same authority was later to appoint Whitgift to the same office.

To the ordinary cultivated student of civilization the genesis of a Church is of little interest, and at all events we must not confound the history of a Church with its spiritual meaning. To the ordinary observer the English Church in history means Hooker and Jeremy Taylor—and should mean Andrewes also: it means George Herbert, and it means the churches of Christopher Wren. This is not an error: a Church is to be judged by its intellectual fruits, by its influence on the sensibility of the most sensitive and on the intellect of the most intelligent, and it must be made real to the eye by monuments of artistic merit. The English Church has no literary monument equal to that of Dante, no intellectual monument equal to that of St. Thomas, no devotional monument equal to that of St. John of the Cross, no building so beautiful as the Cathedral of Modena or the basilica of St. Zeno in Verona. But there are those for whom the City churches are as precious as any of the four hundred odd churches in Rome which are in no danger of demolition, and for whom St. Paul's, in



## LANCELOT ANDREWES

comparison with St. Peter's, is not lacking in decency, and the English devotional verse of the seventeenth century—admitting the one difficult case of conversion, that of Crashaw—finer than that of any other country or communion at the time.

The intellectual achievement and the prose style of Hooker and Andrewes came to complete the structure of the English Church as the philosophy of the thirteenth century crowns the Catholic Church. To make this statement is not to compare the 'Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity' with the 'Summa'. The seventeenth century was not an age in which the Churches occupied themselves with metaphysics, and none of the writings of the fathers of the English Church belongs to the category of speculative philosophy. But the achievement of Hooker and Andrewes was to make the English Church more worthy of intellectual assent. No religion can survive the judgment of history unless the best minds of its time have collaborated in its construction; if the Church of Elizabeth is worthy of the age of Shakespeare and Jonson, that is because of the work of Hooker and Andrewes.

The writings of both Hooker and Andrewes illustrate that determination to stick to essentials, that awareness of the needs of the time, the desire for clarity and precision on matters of importance, and the indifference to matters indifferent, which



was the general policy of Elizabeth. These characteristics are illustrated in the definition of the Church in the second book of the 'Ecclesiastical Polity'. ('The Church of Christ which was from the beginning is and continueth until the end.') And in both Hooker and Andrewes—the latter the friend and intimate of Isaac Casaubon—we find also that breadth of culture, an ease with humanism and Renaissance learning, which helps to put them on terms of equality with their Continental antagonists and to elevate their Church above the position of a local schismatic sect. They were fathers of a national Church and they were Europeans. Compare a sermon of Andrewes with a sermon by another earlier master, Latimer. It is not merely that Andrewes knew Greek, or that Latimer was addressing a far less cultivated public, or that the sermons of Andrewes are peppered with allusion and quotation. It is rather that Latimer, the preacher of Henry VIII and Edward VI, is merely a Protestant; but the voice of Andrewes is the voice of a man who has a formed visible Church behind him, who speaks with the old authority and the new culture. It is the difference of negative and positive: Andrewes is the first great preacher of the English Catholic Church.

The sermons of Andrewes are not easy reading. They are only for the reader who can elevate him-

self to the subject. The most conspicuous qualities of the style are three: ordonnance, or arrangement and structure, precision in the use of words, and relevant intensity. The last remains to be defined. All of them are best elucidated by comparison with a prose which is much more widely known, but to which I believe that we must assign a lower place—that of Donne. Donne's sermons, or fragments from Donne's sermons are certainly known to hundreds who have hardly heard of Andrewes; and they are known precisely for the reasons because of which they are inferior to those of Andrewes. In the introduction to an admirable selection of passages from Donne's sermons, which was published a few years ago by the Oxford Press, Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith, after 'trying to explain Donne's sermons and account for them in a satisfactory manner', observes:

'And yet in these, as in his poems, there remains something baffling and enigmatic which still eludes our last analysis. Reading these old hortatory and dogmatic pages, the thought suggests itself that Donne is often saying something else, something poignant and personal, and yet, in the end, incommunicable to us.'

We may cavil at the word 'incommunicable', and pause to ask whether the incommunicable is not often the vague and unformed; but the state-

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

ment is essentially right. About Donne there hangs the shadow of the impure motive; and impure motives lend their aid to a facile success. He is a little of the religious spell-binder, the Reverend Billy Sunday of his time, the flesh-creeper, the sorcerer of emotional orgy. We emphasize this aspect to the point of the grotesque. Donne had a trained mind; but without belittling the intensity or the profundity of his experience, we can suggest that this experience was not perfectly controlled, and that he lacked spiritual discipline.

But Bishop Andrewes is one of the community of the born spiritual, one

*che in questo mondo,  
contemplando, gusto di quella pace.*

Intellect and sensibility were in harmony; and hence arose the particular qualities of his style. Those who would prove this harmony would do well to examine, before proceeding to the sermons, the volume of *Preces Privatæ*. This book, composed by him for his private devotions, was printed only after his death; a few manuscript copies may have been given away during his lifetime—one bears the name of William Laud. It appears to have been written in Latin and translated by him into Greek; some of it is in Hebrew; it has been several times translated into English. The most recent edition is the translation of F. E. Brightman, with an



## LANCELOT ANDREWES

interesting introduction, in 1903 (Methuen). They are almost wholly an arrangement of Biblical texts, and of texts from elsewhere in Andrewes's immense theological reading. Dr. Brightman has a paragraph of admirable criticism of these prayers which deserves to be quoted in full:

‘But the structure is not merely an external scheme or framework: the internal structure is as close as the external. Andrewes develops an idea he has in his mind: every line tells and adds something. He does not expatiate, but moves forward: if he repeats, it is because the repetition has a real force of expression; if he accumulates, each new word or phrase represents a new development, a substantive addition to what he is saying. He assimilates his material and advances by means of it. His quotation is not decoration or irrelevance, but the matter in which he expresses what he wants to say. His single thoughts are no doubt often suggested by the word he borrows, but the thoughts are made his own, and the constructive force, the fire that fuses them, is his own. And this internal, progressive, often poetic structure is marked outwardly. The editions have not always reproduced this feature of the *Præces*, nor perhaps is it possible in any ordinary page to represent the structure adequately; but in the manuscript the intention is clear enough. The prayers are arranged, not merely in paragraphs, but in lines

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

advanced and recessed, so as in a measure to mark the inner structure and the steps and stages of the movement. Both in form and in matter Andrewes's prayers may often be described rather as hymns.'

The first part of this excellent piece of criticism may be applied equally well to the prose of Andrewes's sermons. The prayers themselves, which, as Dr. Brightman seems to hint, should take for Anglicans a place beside the Exercises of St. Ignatius and the works of St. François de Sales, illustrate the devotion to private prayer (Andrewes is said to have passed nearly five hours a day in prayer) and to public ritual which Andrewes bequeathed to William Laud; and his passion for order in religion is reflected in his passion for order in prose.

Readers who hesitate before the five large volumes of Andrewes's sermons in *The Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology* may find their introduction more easy through the *Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity*, which were published separately in a small volume by Griffith, Farran, Okeden and Welsh, in *The Ancient and Modern Library of Theological Literature*, and which can still be picked up here and there. It is an additional advantage that these sermons are all on the same subject, the Incarnation; they are the Christmas Day sermons preached before King James between 1605 and 1624. And in the sermons preached



## LANCELOT ANDREWES

before King James, himself a theologian, Andrewes was not hampered as he sometimes was in addressing more popular audiences. His erudition had full play, and his erudition is essential to his originality.

Bishop Andrewes, as was hinted above, tried to confine himself in his sermons to the elucidation of what he considered essential in dogma; he said himself that in sixteen years he had never alluded to the question of predestination, to which the Puritans, following their Continental brethren, attached so much importance. The Incarnation was to him an essential dogma, and we are able to compare seventeen developments of the same idea. Reading Andrewes on such a theme is like listening to a great Hellenist expounding a text of the 'Posterior Analytics': altering the punctuation, inserting or removing a comma or a semi-colon to make an obscure passage suddenly luminous, dwelling on a single word, comparing its use in its nearer and in its most remote contexts, purifying a disturbed or cryptic lecture-note into lucid profundity. To persons whose minds are habituated to feed on the vague jargon of our time, when we have a vocabulary for everything and exact ideas about nothing—when a word half-understood, torn from its place in some alien or half-formed science, as of psychology, conceals from both writer and reader the

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

utter meaninglessness of a statement, when all dogma is in doubt except the dogmas of sciences of which we have read in the newspapers, when the language of theology itself, under the influence of an undisciplined mysticism of popular philosophy, tends to become a language of tergiversation—Andrewes may seem pedantic and verbal. It is only when we have saturated ourselves in his prose, followed the movement of his thought, that we find his examination of words terminating in the ecstasy of assent. Andrewes takes a word and derives the world from it; squeezing and squeezing the word until it yields a full juice of meaning which we should never have supposed any word to possess. In this process the qualities which we have mentioned, of ordonnance and precision, are exercised.

Take, almost at random, a passage from Andrewes's exposition of the text 'That there is born unto you this day a Saviour, Which is Christ the Lord, in the City of David' (Luke ii. 10, 11). Any passage that we can choose must be torn violently from its context.

'Who is it? Three things are said of this Child by the Angel. (1) He is "a Saviour". (2) "Which is Christ." (3) "Christ the Lord." Three of his titles, well and orderly inferred one of another by good consequence. We cannot miss one of them; they

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

be necessary all. Our method on earth is to begin with great; in heaven they begin with good first.

‘First, then, “a Saviour”; that is His name, Jesus, *Soter*; and in that Name His benefit, *Salus*, “saving health or salvation”. Such a name as the great Orator himself saith of it, *Soter, hoc quantum est? Ita magnum est ut latino uno verbo exprimi non possit.* ‘This name Saviour is so great as no one word can express the force of it.’

‘But we are not so much to regard the *ecce* how great it is, as *gaudium* what joy is in it; that is the point we are to speak to. And for that, men may talk what they will, but sure there is no joy in the world to the joy of a man saved; no joy so great, no news so welcome, as to one ready to perish, in case of a lost man, to hear of one that will save him. In danger of perishing by sickness, to hear of one will make him well again; by sentence of the law, of one with a pardon to save his life; by enemies, of one that will rescue and set him in safety. Tell any of these, assure them but of a Saviour, it is the best news he ever heard in his life. There is joy in the name of a Saviour. And even this way, this Child is a Saviour too. *Potest hoc facere, sed hoc non est opus Eius.* “This He can do, but this is not His work”; a farther matter there is, a greater salvation He came for. And it may be we need not any of



these; we are not presently sick, in no fear of the law, in no danger of enemies. And it may be, if we were, we fancy to ourselves to be relieved some other way. But that which He came for, that saving we need all; and none but He can help us to it. We have therefore all cause to be glad for the Birth of this Saviour.'

And then, after this succession of short sentences—no one is more master of the short sentence than Andrewes—in which the effort is to find the exact meaning and make that meaning live, he slightly but sufficiently alters the rhythm in proceeding more at large:

'I know not how, but when we hear of saving or mention of a Saviour, presently our mind is carried to the saving of our skin, of our temporal state, of our bodily life, and farther saving we think not of. But there is another life not to be forgotten, and greater the dangers, and the destruction more to be feared than of this here, and it would be well sometimes we were remembered of it. Besides our skin and flesh a soul we have, and it is our better part by far, that also hath need of a Saviour; that hath her destruction out of which, that hath her destroyer from which she would be saved, and those would be thought on. Indeed our chief thought and care would be for that; how to escape the wrath, how to be saved from the destruction to come,

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

whither our sins will certainly bring us. Sin it is will destroy us all.'

In this extraordinary prose, which appears to repeat, to stand still, but is nevertheless proceeding in the most deliberate and orderly manner, there are often flashing phrases which never desert the memory. In an age of adventure and experiment in language, Andrewes is one of the most resourceful of authors in his devices for seizing the attention and impressing the memory. Phrases such as 'Christ is no wild-cat. What talk ye of twelve days?' or 'the word within a word, unable to speak a word', do not desert us; nor do the sentences in which, before extracting all the spiritual meaning of a text, Andrewes forces a concrete presence upon us.

Of the wise men come from the East:

'It was no summer progress. A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, *in solstitio brumali*, "the very dead of winter".'

Of 'the Word made flesh', again:

'I add yet farther; what flesh? The flesh of an infant. What, *Verbum infans*, the Word an infant? The Word, and not be able to speak a word? How evil agreeth this! This He put up. How born, how

entertained? In a stately palace, cradle of ivory, robes of estate? No; but a stable for His palace, a manger for His cradle, poor clouts for His array.'

He will not hesitate to hammer, to inflect, even to play upon a word for the sake of driving home its meaning:

'Let us then make this so accepted a time in itself twice acceptable by our accepting, which He will acceptably take at our hands.'

We can now better estimate what is this that we have called relevant intensity, for we have had enough of passages from Andrewes to recognize the extremity of his difference from Donne.

Everyone knows a passage from a sermon of Donne's, which is given by Mr. Pearsall Smith under the title 'I am Not all Here'.

'I am here speaking to you, and yet I consider by the way, in the same instant, what is likely you will say to one another, when I have done, you are not all here neither; you are here now, hearing me, and yet you are thinking that you have heard a better sermon somewhere else of this text before; you are here, and yet you think you could have heard some other doctrine of downright *Predestination* and *Reprobation* roundly delivered somewhere else with more edification to you; you are here, and you remember yourselves that now yee think of it: This had been the fittest time, now, when everybody



## LANCELOT ANDREWES

else is at church, to have made such and such a private visit; and because you would bee there, you are there,'

after which Mr. Pearsall Smith very happily places the paragraph on 'Imperfect Prayers':

'A memory of yesterday's pleasures, a feare of to-morrow's dangers, a straw under my knee, a noise in mine eare, a light in mine eye, an anything a nothing, a fancy, a Chimera in my braine, troubles me in my prayer. So certainly is there nothing, nothing in spirituall things, perfect in this world.'

These are thoughts which would never have come to Andrewes. When Andrewes begins his sermon, from beginning to end you are sure that he is wholly in his subject, unaware of anything else, that his emotion grows as he penetrates more deeply into his subject, that he is finally 'alone with the Alone', with the mystery which he is seeking to grasp more and more firmly. One is reminded of the words of Arnold about the preaching of Newman. Andrewes's emotion is purely contemplative; it is not personal, it is wholly evoked by the object of contemplation, to which it is adequate; his emotion is wholly contained in and explained by its object. But with Donne there is always the something else, the 'baffling' of which Mr. Pearsall Smith speaks in his introduction. Donne is a 'personality' in a sense in which Andrewes is not: his sermons, one feels, are

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

a 'means of self-expression'. He is constantly finding an object which shall be adequate to his feelings; Andrewes is wholly absorbed in the object and therefore responds with the adequate emotion. Andrewes has the *goût pour la vie spirituelle*, which is not native to Donne. On the other hand, it would be a great mistake to remember only that Donne was called to the priesthood by King James against his will, and that he accepted a benefice because he had no other way of making a living. Donne had a genuine taste both for theology and for religious emotion; but he belonged to that class of persons, of which there are always one or two examples in the modern world, who seek refuge in religion from the tumults of a strong emotional temperament which can find no complete satisfaction elsewhere. He is not wholly without kinship to Huysmans.

But Donne is not the less valuable, though he is the more dangerous for this reason. Of the two men, it may be said that Andrewes is the more medieval, because he is the more pure, and because his bond was with the Church, with tradition. His intellect was satisfied by theology and his sensibility by prayer and liturgy. Donne is the more modern—if we are careful to take this word exactly, without any implication of value, or any suggestion that we must have more sympathy with Donne than

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

with Andrewes. Donne is much less the mystic; he is primarily interested in man. He is much less traditional. In his thought Donne has, on the other hand, much more in common with the Jesuits, and, on the other hand, much more in common with the Calvinists, than has Andrewes. Donne many times betrays the consequences of early Jesuit influence and of his later studies in Jesuit literature; in his cunning knowledge of the weaknesses of the human heart, his understanding of human sin, his skill in coaxing and persuading the attention of the variable human mind to Divine objects, and in a kind of smiling tolerance among his menaces of damnation. He is dangerous only for those who find in his sermons an indulgence of their sensibility, or for those who, fascinated by 'personality' in the romantic sense of the word—for those who find in 'personality' an ultimate value—forget that in the spiritual hierarchy there are places higher than that of Donne. Donne will certainly have always more readers than Andrewes, for the reason that his sermons can be read in detached passages and for the reason that they can be read by those who have no interest in the subject. He has many means of appeal, and appeals to many temperaments and minds, and, among others, to those capable of a certain wantonness of the spirit. Andrewes will never have many readers in any one generation, and his will never be

## LANCELOT ANDREWES

the immortality of anthologies. Yet his prose is not inferior to that of any sermons in the language, unless it be some of Newman's. And even the larger public which does not read him may do well to remember his greatness in history—a place second to none in the history of the formation of the English Church.



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## JOHN BRAMHALL<sup>1</sup>

John Bramhall, Bishop of Derry under Charles I and Primate of Ireland under Charles II, is not at all an easy subject for a biography. He was a great man; but either by defect of genius or by ill-luck he is not known as he should be known, and his works are not read as they should be read. Indeed, it is largely ill luck. Not only were his immense energy and ability divided among a number of important actions, so that he has never become the symbolical representative of anything; but some of his most important activity was exerted upon causes which are now forgotten. As Bishop of Derry, as the lieutenant of Wentworth and Laud, he did much to reform and establish the Irish Church and to bring it into conformity with the English Church; he saw his work largely undone by Cromwell; as Primate of Ireland during the first years of

<sup>1</sup> *Archbishop Bramhall*. By. W. J. Sparrow-Simpson, D.D. (In the English Theologians Series.) S.P.C.K.

## JOHN BRAMHALL

Charles II, and in his old age, he set to work to build it up again. Had his labours been in England instead of Ireland he might now be better remembered. His middle years were spent in exile; and perhaps it is the work he performed during these years, often in illness, danger, and vicissitudes, that should earn him particular gratitude from his Church. This is a chapter of Church history which is too little known; few people realize how near in those times the English Church came to perishing utterly, or realize that had the Commonwealth survived a few years longer the Church would have fallen into a disorder from which it might never have recovered. During the exile Bramhall was the stoutest inheritor of the tradition of Andrewes and Laud.

Dr. Sparrow-Simpson has treated the history of Bramhall's career in Ireland and his activities abroad during the Commonwealth fully, but with a proper sense of proportion. He leaves himself space to devote several chapters to Bramhall's controversial writings; he is specially to be praised for the skill with which he has digested these writings and condensed and organized so much various information into two hundred and fifty-one pages. With the purely historical matter I am not competent to deal; Bramhall's life includes an important part of the history of the Church and the history of England.

But there is still much interest to be found in Bramhall's writings, and some of them are very much to the point at the present day. One part of his work that is of particular importance is his controversy with Hobbes. It is sometimes cited by historians of philosophy, but has never received the attention it deserves. Bramhall, as Dr. Sparrow-Simpson points out, had by no means the worst of the argument, and the whole debate, with the two striking and opposed personalities engaged in it, throws light upon the condition of philosophy and theology at that time. The most important of the questions at issue are two: the freedom of the will and the relation between Church and State.

Thomas Hobbes was one of those extraordinary little upstarts whom the chaotic motions of the Renaissance tossed into an eminence which they hardly deserved and have never lost. When I say the Renaissance I mean for this purpose the period between the decay of scholastic philosophy and the rise of modern science. The thirteenth century had the gift of philosophy, or reason; the later seventeenth century had the gift of mathematics, or science; but the period between had ceased to be rational without having learned to be scientific. There was nothing particularly new about the determinism of Hobbes; but he gave to his determinism and theory of sense perception a new point

## JOHN BRAMHALL

and piquancy by applying it, so to speak, almost to topical questions; and by his metaphor of Leviathan he provided an ingenious framework on which there was some peg or other to hang every question of philosophy, psychology, government, and economics.

Hobbes shows considerable ingenuity and determination in his attempt to carry out his theory of the Will rigorously to explain the whole and every aspect of human behaviour. It is certain that in the end he lands himself in sophistries. But at the time of Hobbes and Bramhall, and indeed ever since until recently, it was impossible that a controversy on this subject should keep to the point. For a philosopher like Hobbes has already a mixed attitude, partly philosophic and partly scientific; the philosophy being in decay and the science immature. Hobbes's philosophy is not so much a philosophy as it is an adumbration of the universe of material atoms regulated by laws of motion which formed the scientific view of the world from Newton to Einstein. Hence there is quite naturally no place in Hobbes's universe for the human will; what he failed to see is that there was no place in it for consciousness either, or for human beings. So his only philosophical theory is a theory of sense perception, and his psychology leaves no place in the world for his theory of government. His theory of government has no



## JOHN BRAMHALL

philosophic basis: it is merely a collection of discrete opinions, prejudices, and genuine reflections upon experience which are given a spurious unity by a shadowy metaphysic.

The attitude of Hobbes toward moral philosophy has by no means disappeared from human thought; nor has the confusion between moral philosophy and a mechanistic psychology. There is a modern theory, closely akin to that of Hobbes, which would make value reside entirely in the degree of organization of natural impulses. I cite the following passage from an important book by one of the most acute of younger psychologists:

'Anything is valuable which will satisfy an appetency without involving the frustration of some equal or more important appetency; in other words, the only reason which can be given for not satisfying a desire is that more important desires will thereby be thwarted. Thus morals become purely prudential, and ethical codes merely the expression of the most general schemes of expediency to which an individual or a race has attained.'<sup>1</sup>

And Mr. Bertrand Russell, in his book, *What I Believe*, p. 43, sings the same tune:

'The practical need of morals arises from the conflict of desires, whether of different people or of the same person at different times or even at one

<sup>1</sup> Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 48.



## JOHN BRAMHALL

time. A man desires to drink, and also to be fit for his work next morning. We think him immoral if he adopts the course which gives him the smaller total satisfaction of desire.'

The difficulty with such theories<sup>1</sup> is that they merely remove the inherently valuable a further degree; just as Hobbes's Theory of Will removes freedom from the individual considered as the object of psychology, but really implies the reality of freewill in society. It will be remembered that Hobbes wished to maintain the activity of human legislation in his deterministic universe; so he considered that law acts as a deterrent force. He did not consider that if human laws themselves are created by the same necessity under which human beings act when encouraged or deterred by the laws, then the whole system ceases to have any meaning, and all values, including his own value of good government, disappear.

It is not to be expected that the arguments advanced by Bramhall against this position should appear very powerful when opposed to the reasonings of modern disciples of Hobbes. But in their own time and place they were excellent. I disregard that part of Bramhall's reasoning which consists in showing that Hobbes's system was incompatible

<sup>1</sup> A thoroughgoing 'Behaviourism', as of Professor Watson, is a different affair.

with Christianity. Hobbes was here in a very weak position of which the Bishop with praiseworthy slyness took full advantage. Hobbes was undoubtedly an atheist and could hardly have been unconscious of the fact; but he was no Spinoza, and would hardly have been willing to sacrifice his worldly prospects for the sake of establishing consistency in his argument. Therefore he has always the worst of the debate. But this is a minor point. Bramhall was able to meet Hobbes also on his own ground. His method of attack illustrates very clearly his type of mind. It was not a subtle mind: it had not the refinement necessary to make a scholastic metaphysician, nor was it the mind of a doctor of the Church who could develop and explicate the meaning of a dogma. It was essentially common sense and right instinct, a mind not gifted to discover truth but tenacious to hold it. It was typical of the best theological minds of that age. Hobbes suffers from not only a tactical but a real disadvantage in his confusion of the spheres of psychology and ethics. Bramhall is single-minded; he does not penetrate the real philosophical incoherence of Hobbes's position; but he touches the point of practical importance and implies the profounder objection to Hobbes when he says simply that Hobbes makes praise and blame meaningless. 'If a man be born blind or with one eye, we do not blame him for it;

## JOHN BRAMHALL

but if a man have lost his sight by his intemperance, we blame him justly.' This objection is finally unanswerable.

I have asserted that Hobbes's psychological analysis of the human mind has no rational connection with his theory of the State. But it has, of course, an emotional connection; one can say that both doctrines belong naturally to the same temperament. Materialistic determinism and absolutist government fit into the same scheme of life. And this theory of the State shows the same lack of balance which is a general characteristic of philosophers after the Renaissance. Hobbes merely exaggerates one aspect of the good State. In doing so he developed a particularly lamentable theory of the relation between Church and State.

There is no question to which a man like Hobbes can give a less satisfactory answer than that of Church and State. For Hobbes thought in extremes and in this problem the extreme is always wrong. In the relation of Church and State, a doctrine when pushed to the extreme may even be transformed to the opposite of itself. Hobbes has something in common with Suarez.

Bramhall's position on this subject is characteristic of his sense of realities and his ability to grasp what was expedient. He had also what Hobbes lacked, the historical sense, which is a gift not only



of the historian, but of the efficient lawyer, statesman, or theologian. His account of the relations of the English kings with the Papacy, from the earliest times, and his selection of parallels from the history of continental Europe, show both wide knowledge and great skill in argument. His thinking is a perfect example of the pursuit of the *via media*, and the *via media* is of all ways the most difficult to follow. It requires discipline and self-control, it requires both imagination and hold on reality. In a period of debility like our own, few men have the energy to follow the middle way in government; for lazy or tired minds there is only extremity or apathy: dictatorship or communism, with enthusiasm or with indifference. An able Conservative writer, Mr. Keith Feiling, in his *England under the Tudors and Stewarts*, refers to Hobbes as 'the acutest thinker of the age'. It would be equally true to say that he is the most eminent example in his age of a particularly lazy type of thinker. At any rate, the age owes a very great part of its distinction, both in England and in France, to thinkers of wholly the opposite type to Hobbes.

The French Church in the time of Louis XIV ('*il fut gallicain, ce siècle, et janseniste*') resembled the English Church under the Stuarts in several respects. In both countries a strong and autocratic civil Government controlled and worked with a

## JOHN BRAMHALL

strongly national Church. In each country there was a certain balance of power; in France between the throne and the papacy; in England an internal balance of power between strong personalities. There was much in common between Bramhall and Bossuet. But between Bramhall and Hobbes there is no sympathy whatever. Superficially their theories of the kingship bear some resemblance to each other. Both men were violently hostile to democracy in any form or degree. Both men believed that the monarch should have absolute power. Bramhall affirmed the divine right of kings: Hobbes rejected this noble faith, and asserted in effect the divine right of power, however come by. But Bramhall's view is not so absurdly romantic, or Hobbes's so soundly reasonable, as might seem. To Bramhall the king himself was a kind of symbol, and his assertion of divine right was a way of laying upon the king a double responsibility. It meant that the king had not merely a civil but a religious obligation towards his people. And the kingship of Bramhall is less absolute than the kingship of Hobbes. For Hobbes the Church was merely a department of the State, to be run exactly as the king thought best. Bramhall does not tell us clearly what would be the duties of a private citizen if the king should violate or overturn the Christian religion, but he obviously leaves a wide expedient margin for resist-



ance or justified rebellion. It is curious that the system of Hobbes, as Dr. Sparrow-Simpson has observed, not only insists on autocracy but tolerates *unjustified* revolution. Hobbes's theory is in some ways very near to that of Machiavelli, with this important exception, that he has none of Machiavelli's profound observation and none of Machiavelli's limiting wisdom. The sole test and justification for Hobbes is in the end merely material success. For Hobbes all standards of good and evil are frankly relative.

It is extraordinary that a philosophy so essentially revolutionary as that of Hobbes, and so similar to that of contemporary Russia, should ever have been supposed to give any support to Toryism. But its ambiguity is largely responsible for its success. Hobbes was a revolutionary in thought and a timid conservative in action; and his theory of government is congenial to that type of person who is conservative from prudence but revolutionary in his dreams. This type of person is not altogether uncommon. In Hobbes there are symptoms of the same mentality as Nietzsche: his belief in violence is a confession of weakness. Hobbes's violence is of a type that often appeals to gentle people. His specious effect of unity between a very simple theory of sense perception and an equally simple theory of government is of a kind that will always be popular

## JOHN BRAMHALL

because it appears to be intellectual but is really emotional, and therefore very soothing to lazy minds.

Bramhall's abilities of thought and language are nowhere better displayed than in his *Just Vindication of the English Church*. As for the language of Bramhall, I think that Dr. Sparrow-Simpson does him less than justice. It is true that he employs in his vocabulary the most extraordinary confections of Latinity, but the catalogue of some of these expressions which Dr. Sparrow-Simpson gives would lead one to believe that they occur in every sentence. And although Bramhall is not an easy writer, his phrases are lucid and direct and occasionally have real beauty and rhythm. A theologian of his powers, at that period of English prose, a man trained in the theology and the style of Bishop Andrewes, could hardly fail to write prose of distinction.

'Every sudden passionate heat or misunderstanding or shaking of charity amongst Christians, though it were even between the principal pastors of the Church, is not presently schism. As that between Saint Paul and Barnabas in the Acts of the Apostles—who dare say that either of them were schismatic? or that between Saint Hierome and Ruffinus, who charged one another mutually with heresy; or that between Saint Chrysostom and Epiphanius, who refused to join in prayers; Saint Chrysostom wish-

## JOHN BRAMHALL

ing that Epiphanius might never return home alive, and Epiphanius wishing that Saint Chrysostom might not die a Bishop; both which things, by the just disposition of Almighty God, fell out according to the passionate and uncharitable desires of these holy persons; who had Christian charity still radiated in their hearts, though the violent torrent of sudden passion did for a time beat down all other respects before it.'

This is rather heavy going, and the word 'radiated' is one of those blemishes to which Dr. Sparrow-Simpson calls attention; but the style has distinction. In prose style, as well as in theology, Bramhall is a link between the generation of Andrewes and the generation of Jeremy Taylor. The prose of Bramhall is great prose only in the sense that it is good prose of a great epoch. I cannot believe that Bramhall was a great preacher. Andrewes and Donne and Taylor had a poetic sensibility; that is to say, they had the sensitiveness necessary to record and to bring to convergence on a theological point a multitude of fleeting but universal feelings. Their words linger and echo in the minds as Bramhall's never do; we forget Bramhall's phrases the moment we turn away from Bramhall's subject.

But for ordonnance, logical arrangements, for mastery of every fact relevant to a thesis, Bramhall is surpassed only by Hooker; and I am not sure that

## JOHN BRAMHALL

in the structure of the *Just Vindication of the English Church* he does not surpass even Hooker. And this book is no antiquity; it is a work which ought to be studied by anyone to whom the relation of Church and State is an actual and importunate problem. There could hardly be a greater difference than that between the situation during the first half of the seventeenth century and the situation to-day. Yet the differences are such as to make the work of Bramhall the more pertinent to our problems. For they are differences in relation to a fundamental unity of thought between Bramhall, and what he represents, and ourselves.



## FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

It is unusual that a book so famous and so influential should remain out of print so long as Bradley's *Ethical Studies*.<sup>1</sup> The one edition appeared in 1876: Bradley's refusal to reprint it never wavered. In 1893, in a footnote in *Appearance and Reality*, and in words characteristic of the man, he wrote: 'I feel that the appearance of other books, as well as the decay of those superstitions against which largely it was directed, has left me free to consult my own pleasure in the matter.' The dates of his three books, the *Ethical Studies* in 1876, the *Principles of Logic* in 1883, and *Appearance and Reality* in 1893, leave us in no doubt that his pleasure was the singular one of thinking rather than the common one of writing books. And Bradley always assumed, with what will remain for those who did not know him a curious blend of humility and irony, an attitude of

<sup>1</sup> *Ethical Studies*. By F. H. Bradley, O.M., LL.D. Second Edition. (Oxford: Clarendon Press. London: Milford.)

## FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

extreme diffidence about his own work. His *Ethical Studies*, he told us (or told our fathers), did not aim at 'the construction of a system of Moral Philosophy'. The first words of the preface to his *Principles of Logic* are: 'The following work makes no claim to supply any systematic treatment of logic.' He begins the preface to *Appearance and Reality* with the words: 'I have described the following work as an essay in metaphysics. Neither in form nor extent does it carry out the idea of a system.' The phrase for each book is almost the same. And many readers, having in mind Bradley's polemical irony and his obvious zest in using it, his habit of discomfiting an opponent with a sudden profession of ignorance, of inability to understand, or of incapacity for abstruse thought, have concluded that this is all a mere pose—and even a somewhat unscrupulous one. But deeper study of Bradley's mind convinces us that the modesty is real, and his irony the weapon of a modest and highly sensitive man. Indeed, if this had been a pose it would never have worn so well as it has. We have to consider, then, what is the nature of Bradley's influence and why his writings and his personality fascinate those whom they do fascinate; and what are his claims to permanence.

Certainly one of the reasons for the power he still exerts, as well as an indubitable claim to permanence is his great gift of style. It is for his purposes—and his

purposes are more varied than is usually supposed—a perfect style. Its perfection has prevented it from cutting any great figure in prose anthologies and literature manuals, for it is perfectly welded with the matter. Ruskin's works are extremely readable in snippets even for many who take not a particle of interest in the things in which Ruskin was so passionately interested. Hence he survives in anthologies, while his books have fallen into undue neglect. Bradley's books can never fall into this neglect because they will never rise to this notoriety; they come to the hands only of those who are qualified to treat them with respect. But perhaps a profounder difference between a style like Bradley's and a style like Ruskin's is a greater purity and concentration of purpose. One feels that the emotional intensity of Ruskin is partly a deflection of something that was baffled in life, whereas Bradley, like Newman, is directly and wholly that which he is. For the secret of Bradley's style, like that of Bergson—whom he resembles in this if in nothing else—is the intense addiction to an intellectual passion.

The nearest resemblance in style, however, is not Ruskin but Matthew Arnold. It has not been sufficiently observed that Bradley makes use of the same means as Arnold, and for similar ends. To take first the most patent resemblance, we find in Bradley the same type of fun as that which Arnold has with his



FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

young friend Arminius. In *The Principles of Logic* there is a celebrated passage in which Bradley is attacking the theory of association of ideas according to Professor Bain, and explains how on this principle an infant comes to recognize a lump of sugar:

‘A young child, or one of the lower animals, is given on Monday a round piece of sugar, eats it and finds it sweet. On Tuesday it sees a square piece of sugar, and proceeds to eat it. . . . Tuesday’s sensation and Monday’s image are not only separate facts; which, because alike, are therefore *not* the same; but they differ perceptibly both in quality and environment. What is to lead the mind to take one for the other?

‘Sudden at this crisis, and in pity at distress, there leaves the heaven with rapid wing a goddess Primitive Credulity. Breathing in the ear of the bewildered infant she whispers, The thing which has happened once will happen once more. Sugar was sweet, and sugar will be sweet. And Primitive Credulity is accepted forthwith as the mistress of our life. She leads our steps on the path of experience, until her fallacies, which cannot always be pleasant, at length become suspect. We wake up indignant at the kindly fraud by which the goddess so long has deceived us. So she shakes her wings, and flying to the stars, where there are no philosophers, leaves us here to the guidance of—I cannot think what.’



This sort of solemn banter is exactly what an admirer of Arnold is ready to enjoy. But it is not only in this fun, or in his middle style, that Bradley is like Arnold; they are alike in their purple passages. The two following may be compared. By Arnold:

‘And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection—to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side—nearer, perhaps, than all the science of Tübingen. Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties! what example could ever so inspire us to keep down the Philistines in ourselves, what teacher could ever so save us from that bondage to which we are all prone, that bondage which Goethe, in his incomparable lines on the death of Schiller, makes it his friend’s highest praise (and nobly did Schiller deserve the praise) to have left miles out of sight behind him—the bondage of “was uns alle bändigt, *das Gemeine!*” ’

FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

The passage from *The Principles of Logic* is not so well known:

‘It may come from a failure in my metaphysics, or from a weakness of the flesh which continues to blind me, but the notion that existence could be the same as understanding strikes as cold and ghost-like as the dreariest materialism. That the glory of this world in the end is appearance leaves the world more glorious, if we feel it is a show of some fuller splendour; but the sensuous curtain is a deception and a cheat, if it hides some colourless movement of atoms, some spectral woof of impalpable abstractions, or unearthly ballet of bloodless categories. Though dragged to such conclusions, we cannot embrace them. Our principles may be true, but they are not reality. They no more *make* that Whole which commands our devotion than some shredded dissection of human tatters *is* that warm and breathing beauty of flesh which our hearts found delightful.’

Any one who is at all sensitive to style will recognize the similarity of tone and tension and beat. It is not altogether certain that the passage from Bradley is not the better; at any rate such a phrase as Arnold’s ‘ineffable charm’ has not worn at all well.

But if the two men fought with the same weapons—and fundamentally, in spite of Bradley’s assault upon Arnold, for the same causes—the weapons of Bradley had behind them a heavier force and a

closer precision. Exactly what Bradley fought for and exactly what he fought against have not been quite understood; understanding has been obscured by the dust of Bradley's logical battles. People are inclined to believe that what Bradley did was to demolish the logic of Mill and the psychology of Bain. If he had done that, it would have been a lesser service than what he has done; and if he had done that it would have been less of a service than people think, for there is much that is good in the logic of Mill and the psychology of Bain. But Bradley did not attempt to destroy Mill's logic. Any one who reads his own *Principles* will see that his force is directed not against Mill's logic as a whole but only against certain limitations, imperfections and abuses. He left the structure of Mill's logic standing, and never meant to do anything else. On the other hand, the *Ethical Studies* are not merely a demolition of the Utilitarian theory of conduct but an attack upon the whole Utilitarian mind. For Utilitarianism was, as every reader of Arnold knows, a great temple in Philistia. And of this temple Arnold hacked at the ornaments and cast down the images, and his best phrases remain for ever gibing and scolding in our memory. But Bradley, in his philosophical critique of Utilitarianism, undermined the foundations. The spiritual descendants of Bentham have built anew, as they always will; but at least, in building another



## FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

temple for the same worship, they have had to apply a different style of architecture. And this is the social basis of Bradley's distinction, and the social basis is even more his claim to our gratitude than the logical basis: he replaced a philosophy which was crude and raw and provincial by one which was, in comparison, catholic, civilized, and universal. True, he was influenced by Kant and Hegel and Lotze. But Kant and Hegel and Lotze are not so despicable as some enthusiastic medievalists would have us believe, and they are, in comparison with the school of Bentham, catholic and civilized and universal. In fighting the battles that he fought in the 'seventies and 'eighties Bradley was fighting for a European and ripened and wise philosophy, against an insular and immature and cranky one; the same battle that Arnold was fighting against the *British Banner*, Judge Edmonds, Newman Weeks, Deborah Butler, Elderess Polly, Brother Noyes, Mr. Murphy, the Licensed Victuallers and the Commercial Travellers.

It is not to say that Arnold's work was vain if we say that it is to be done again; for we must know in advance, if we are prepared for that conflict, that the combat may have truces but never a peace. If we take the widest and wisest view of a Cause, there is no such thing as a Lost Cause because there is no such thing as a Gained Cause. We fight for lost causes because we know that our defeat and dismay



may be the preface to our successors' victory, though that victory itself will be temporary; we fight rather to keep something alive than in the expectation that anything will triumph. If Bradley's philosophy is to-day a little out of fashion, we must remark that what has superseded it, what is now in favour, is, for the most part, crude and raw and provincial (though infinitely more technical and scientific) and must perish in its turn. Arnold turned from mid-century Radicalism with the reflection 'A new power has suddenly appeared'. There is always a new power; but the new power destined to supersede the philosophy which has superseded Bradley will probably be something at the same time older, more patient, more supple and more wise. The chief characteristics of much contemporary philosophy are newness and crudeness, impatience, inflexibility in one respect and fluidity in another, and irresponsibility and lack of wisdom. Of wisdom Bradley had a large share; wisdom consists largely of scepticism and uncynical disillusion; and of these Bradley had a large share. And scepticism and disillusion are a useful equipment for religious understanding; and of that Bradley had a share too.

Those who have read the *Ethical Studies* will be ready with the remark that it was Bradley, in this book and in the year 1876, who knocked the bottom out of *Literature and Dogma*. But that does not mean

## FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

that the two men were not on the same side; it means only that *Literature and Dogma* is irrelevant to Arnold's main position as given in the Essays and in *Culture and Anarchy*, that the greatest weakness of Arnold's culture was his weakness in philosophical training, and that in philosophical criticism Bradley exhibits the same type of culture that Arnold exhibited in political and social criticism. Arnold had made an excursion into a field for which he was not armed. Bradley's attack upon Arnold does not take up much space, but Bradley was economical of words; it is all in a few paragraphs and a few foot-notes to the 'Concluding Remarks':

'But here once more "culture" has come to our aid, and has shown us how here, as everywhere, the study of polite literature, which makes for meekness, makes needless also all further education; and we felt already as if the clouds that metaphysic had wrapped about the matter were dissolving in the light of a fresh and sweet intelligence. And, as we turned towards the dawn, we sighed over poor Hegel, who had read neither Goethe nor Homer, nor the Old and New Testaments, nor any of the literature which has gone to form "culture", but, knowing no facts, and reading no books, nor ever asking himself "such a tyro's question as what being really was", sat spinning out of his head those foolish logomachies which impose on no person of refinement.'

Here is the identical weapon of Arnold, sharpened to a razor edge and turned against Arnold.

'But the "stream" and the "tendency" having served their turn, like last week's placards, now fall into the background, and we learn at last that "the Eternal" is not eternal at all, unless we give that name to whatever a generation sees happen, and believes both has happened and will happen—just as the habit of washing ourselves might be termed "the Eternal not ourselves that makes for cleanliness", or "Early to bed and early to rise" the "Eternal not ourselves that makes for longevity", and so on—that "the Eternal", in short, is nothing in the world but a piece of literary clap-trap. The consequence is that all we are left with is the assertion that "righteousness" is "salvation" or welfare, and that there is a "law" and a "Power" which has something to do with this fact; and here again we must not be ashamed to say that we fail to understand what any one of these phrases means, and suspect ourselves once more to be on the scent of clap-trap.'

A footnote continues the Arnold-baiting in a livelier style:

' "Is there a God?" asks the reader. "Oh yes," replies Mr. Arnold, "and I can verify him in experience." "And what is he then?" cries the reader. "Be virtuous, and as a rule you will be happy," is the answer. "Well, and God?" "That is God," says Mr.



## FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

Arnold; "there is no deception, and what more do you want?" I suppose we do want a good deal more. Most of us, certainly the public which Mr. Arnold addresses, want something they can worship; and they will not find that in any hypostasized copy-book heading, which is not much more adorable than "Honesty is the best policy", or "Handsome is that handsome does", or various other edifying maxims, which have not yet come to an apotheosis.'

Such criticism is final. It is patently a great triumph of wit and a great delight to watch when a man's methods, almost his tricks of speech, are thus turned against himself. But if we look more closely into these words and into the whole chapter from which they are taken, we find Bradley to have been not only triumphant in polemic but right in reason. Arnold, with all his great virtues, was not always patient enough, or solicitous enough of any but immediate effect, to avoid inconsistency—as has been painstakingly shown by Mr. J. M. Robertson. In *Culture and Anarchy*, which is probably his greatest book, we hear something said about 'the will of God'; but the 'will of God' seems to become superseded in importance by 'our best self, or right reason, to which we want to give authority'; and this best self looks very much like Matthew Arnold slightly disguised. In our own time one of the most remarkable of our critics, one who is fundamentally on



most questions in the right, and very often right quite alone, Professor Irving Babbitt, has said again and again that the old curbs of class, of authoritative government, and of religion must be supplied in our time by something he calls the 'inner check'. The inner check looks very much like the 'best self' of Matthew Arnold; and though supported by wider erudition and closer reasoning, is perhaps open to the same objections. There are words of Bradley's, and in the chapter from which we have already quoted, that might seem at first sight to support these two eminent doctrines:

'How can the human-divine ideal ever be my will? The answer is, Your will it never can be as the will of your private self, so that your private self should become wholly good. To that self you must die, and by faith be made one with that ideal. You must resolve to give up your will, as the mere will of this or that man, and you must put your whole self, your entire will, into the will of the divine. That must be your one self, as it is your true self; that you must hold to both with thought and will, and all other you must renounce.'

There is one direction in which these words—and, indeed, Bradley's philosophy as a whole—might be pushed, which would be dangerous; the direction of diminishing the value and dignity of the individual, of sacrificing him to a Church or a State.

## FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

But, in any event, the words cannot be interpreted in the sense of Arnold. The distinction is not between a 'private self' and a 'public self' or a 'higher self', it is between the individual as himself and no more, a mere numbered atom, and the individual in communion with God. The distinction is clearly drawn between man's 'mere will' and 'the will of the Divine'. It may be noted also that Bradley is careful, in indicating the process, not to exaggerate either will or intellect at the expense of the other. And in all events it is a process which neither Arnold nor Professor Babbitt could accept. But *if* there is a 'will of God', as Arnold, in a hasty moment, admits, then some doctrine of Grace must be admitted too; or else the 'will of God' is just the same inoperative benevolence which we have all now and then received—and resented—from our fellow human beings. In the end it is a disappointment and a cheat.

Those who return to the reading of *Ethical Studies*, and those who now, after reading the other works of Bradley, read it for the first time, will be struck by the unity of Bradley's thought in the three books and in the collected Essays. But this unity is not the unity of mere fixity. In the *Ethical Studies*, for instance, he speaks of the awareness of the self, the knowledge of one's own existence as indubitable and identical. In *Appearance and Reality*, seventeen years later, he had seen much deeper into the mat-

ter; and had seen that no one 'fact' of experience in isolation is real or is evidence of anything. The unity of Bradley's thought is not the unity attained by a man who never changes his mind. If he had so little occasion to change it, that is because he usually saw his problems from the beginning in all their complexity and connections—saw them, in other words, with wisdom—and because he could never be deceived by his own metaphors—which, indeed, he used most sparingly—and was never tempted to make use of current nostrums.

If all of Bradley's writings are in some sense merely 'essays', that is not solely a matter of modesty, or caution, and certainly not of indifference, or even of ill-health. It is that he perceived the contiguity and continuity of the various provinces of thought. 'Reflection on morality,' he says, 'leads us beyond it. It leads us, in short, to see the necessity of a religious point of view.' Morality and religion are not the same thing, but they cannot beyond a certain point be treated separately. A system of ethics, if thorough, is explicitly or implicitly a system of theology; and to attempt to erect a complete theory of ethics without a religion is none the less to adopt some particular attitude towards religion. In this book, as in his others, Bradley is thoroughly empirical, much more empirical than the philosophies that he opposed. He wished only to determine



## FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

how much of morality could be founded securely without entering into the religious questions at all. As in *Appearance and Reality* he assumes that our common everyday knowledge is on the whole true so far as it goes, but that we do not know how far it does go; so in the *Ethical Studies* he starts always with the assumption that our common attitude towards duty, pleasure, or self-sacrifice is correct so far as it goes—but we do not know how far it does go. And in this he is all in the Greek tradition. It is fundamentally a philosophy of common sense.

Philosophy without wisdom is vain; and in the greater philosophers we are usually aware of that wisdom which for the sake of emphasis and in the most accurate and profound sense could be called even worldly wisdom. Common sense does not mean, of course, either the opinion of the majority or the opinion of the moment; it is not a thing to be got at without maturity and study and thought. The lack of it produces those unbalanced philosophies, such as Behaviourism, of which we hear a great deal. A purely 'scientific' philosophy ends by denying what we know to be true; and, on the other hand, the great weakness of Pragmatism is that it ends by being of no *use* to anybody. Again, it is easy to underestimate Hegel, but it is easy to overestimate Bradley's debt to Hegel; in a philosophy like Bradley's the points at which he *stops*



## FRANCIS HERBERT BRADLEY

are always important points. In an unbalanced or uncultured philosophy words have a way of changing their meaning—as sometimes with Hegel; or else they are made, in a most ruthless and piratical manner, to walk the plank; the words which Professor J. B. Watson drops overboard, and which we know to have meaning and value, are almost innumerable. But Bradley, like Aristotle, is distinguished by his scrupulous respect for words, that their meaning should be neither vague nor exaggerated; and the tendency of his labours is to bring British philosophy closer to the great Greek tradition.

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## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

Mr. Symons has made a good translation, in the Symons style.<sup>1</sup> If our point of view to-day was the point of view of thirty years ago, or even of twenty years ago, we should call it a good translation. To read Mr. Symons now, is to realize how great a man is Baudelaire, who can appear in such a different form to the 'nineties and to the nineteen-twenties. In the translation of Mr. Symons, Baudelaire becomes a poet of the 'nineties, a contemporary of Dowson and Wilde. Dowson and Wilde have passed, and Baudelaire remains; he belonged to a generation that preceded them, and yet he is much more our contemporary than are they. Yet even the 'nineties are nearer to us than the intervening generation—I date in *literary* generations; and the fact that they were interested in Baudelaire indicates some community of spirit. Since the

<sup>1</sup> Baudelaire, *Prose and Poetry*. Translated by Arthur Symons. Albert and Charles Boni. (New York).

## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

generation—the *literary* generation—of Mr. Symons and the 'nineties, another generation has come and gone—the *literary* generation which includes Mr. Bernard Shaw, and Mr. Wells, and Mr. Lytton Strachey. This generation, in its ancestry, 'skipped' the 'nineties: it is the progeny of Huxley, and Tyn-dall, and George Eliot, and Gladstone. And with this generation Baudelaire has nothing to do; but he had something to do with the 'nineties, and he has a great deal to do with us.

But the present volume should perhaps, even in fairness, be read as a document explicatory of the 'nineties, rather than as a current interpretation of Baudelaire. In an interesting preface—too short—Mr. Symons avows that the *Fleurs du Mal* 'in regard to my earliest verses, was at once a fascination and an influence, and because from that time onward his fascination has been like a spell to me, and because that masterpiece has rarely, if ever, been equalled, has rarely, if ever, been surpassed.' Mr. Symons is himself, we must remember, no mean poet; he is typical of the 'nineties; this influence of Baudelaire upon Mr. Symons was manifestly genuine and profound. Why is Baudelaire so different now? We can learn something about Baudelaire, and about the 'nineties, and about ourselves.

Mr. Symons's preface is very interesting: it is perhaps the most important part of the book. What is



## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

interesting is the attitude, so completely of his epoch, towards 'vice'. For Mr. Symons there is, at least *en principe*, a ritual, an hierarchy, a liturgy, of 'vice' or 'sin'. Here is a whole paragraph so significant that I beg to give it entire:

'In the poetry of Baudelaire, with which the poetry of Verlaine is so often compared (*i.e. compared by Mr. Symons and his friends—we no longer find much in common*) there is a deliberate science of sensual and sexual perversity which has something curious in its accentuation of vice with horror, in its passionate devotion to passions. Baudelaire brings every complication of taste, the exasperation of perfumes, the irritant of cruelty, the very odours and colours of corruption, to the creation and adornment of a sort of religion, in which an Eternal Mass is served before a veiled altar. There is no confession, no absolution, not a prayer is permitted which is not set down on the ritual. . . . "To cultivate one's hysteria" I have written "so calmly, and to affront the reader (*Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère*) as a judge rather than a penitent; to be a casuist in confession; to be so much a moralist, with so keen and so subtle a sense of the ecstasy of evil: that has always bewildered the world, even in his own country, where the artist is allowed to live as experimentally as he writes. Baudelaire lived and died solitary, secret, a confessor of sins who had never told the

## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

whole truth, *le mauvais moine* of his own sonnet, an ascetic of passion, a hermit of the Brothel.” ’

This paragraph is of extraordinary interest for several reasons. Even in its cadences it conjures up Wilde and the remoter spectre of Pater. It conjures up also Lionel Johnson with his ‘life is a ritual’. It cannot get away from religion and religious figures of speech. How different a tone from that of the generation of Mr. Shaw,<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Wells, and Mr. Strachey, and Mr. Ernest Hemingway! And how different from our own! Mr. Symons seems to us like a sensitive child, who has been taken into a church, and has been entranced with the effigies, and the candles, and the incense. *Such rugs and jugs and candle lights!*

And indeed the age of Mr. Symons was the ‘golden age’ of one kind of child, as the age of Mr. Shaw was the age of another kind of child. If you take his paragraph to pieces, you will find much that is wrong; though if you swallow it whole, you will digest something that is right. ‘*Passionate devotion to passions*’: no man was ever less the dupe of passions than Baudelaire; he was engaged in an attempt to explain, to justify, to make something of them, an enterprise which puts him almost on a level with the

<sup>1</sup> Of course Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells are also much occupied with religion and *Ersatz-Religion*. But they are concerned with the spirit, not the letter. And the spirit killeth, but the letter giveth life.

## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

author of the 'Vita Nuova'. '*The irritant of cruelty*'—did Baudelaire 'bring' it, or did he not merely examine it (there are some important paragraphs in *Mon Coeur Mis à Nu*). Whoever heard of a Mass before a veiled altar? And hysteria! was anyone ever less hysterical, more lucid, than Baudelaire?<sup>1</sup> There is a difference between hysteria and looking into the Shadow. And when Mr. Symons says, a few pages later, that Baudelaire's 'impeccable' work is 'the direct result of his heredity and of his nerves' I can only protest violently. If any work is to be described as the 'direct' result of heredity and nerves—and 'direct' here can only suggest that heredity and nerves sufficiently account for the work—then I cannot agree that such work is impeccable. We cannot be *primarily* interested in any writer's nerves (and remember please that 'nerves' used in this way is a very vague and unscientific term) or in any one's heredity except for the purpose of knowing to what extent that writer's individuality distorts or detracts from the objective truth which he perceives. If a writer sees truly—as far as he sees at all—then his heredity and nerves do not matter.<sup>2</sup> What is right in Mr. Symons's account is the impression it gives that

<sup>1</sup> It is true that Baudelaire says '*J'ai cultivé mon hystérie.*' But it is one thing for him to say it of himself, another for Mr. Symons to say it about him.

<sup>2</sup> There is a better, and very interesting, account of Baudelaire's heredity in Léon Daudet's book, *L'Hérédité*.



## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

Baudelaire was primarily occupied with religious values. What is wrong is the childish attitude of the 'nineties toward religion, the belief—which is no more than the game of children dressing up and playing at being grown-ups—that there is a religion of Evil, or Vice, or Sin. Swinburne knew nothing about Evil, or Vice, or Sin—if he had known anything he would not have had so much fun out of it. For Swinburne's disciples, the men of the 'nineties, Evil was very good fun. Experience, as a sequence of outward events, is nothing in itself; it is possible to pass through the most terrible experiences protected by histrionic vanity; Wilde, through the whole of the experiences of his life, remained a little Eyas, a child-actor. On the other hand, even to act an important thing is to acknowledge it; and the childishness of the 'nineties is nearer to reality than the childishness of the nineteen-hundreds. But to Baudelaire, alone, these things were real.

Mr. Symons appears a more childish child than Huysmans, merely because a childish Englishman—bred a Protestant—always appears more childish than a childish Frenchman—bred a Roman. Huysmans's fee-fi-fo-fum *décor* of mediævalism has nothing on Mr. Symons's 'veiled altar'. Huysmans, by the way, might have been much more in sympathy with the real spirit of the thirteenth century if he had thought less about it, and bothered less about



## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

architectural lore and quotations from philosophers whom he may have read but certainly did not understand: he is much more 'mediæval' (and much more human) when he describes the visit of Madame Chantelouve to Durtal than when he talks about his Cathedral.

I have already suggested that Mr. Symons, as a translator, turns Baudelaire into a contemporary of Symons. To say this is at once a very high compliment—for the work of translation is to make something foreign, or something remote in time, live with our own life, and no translator can endow his victim with more abundant life than he possesses himself—and a warning. It is not a warning against Mr. Symons as translator. Mr. Symons is as true a translator as Mr. Symons can be. That is to say that his translation is, from his own point of view, almost perfect; we have no suggestions to make to Mr. Symons himself. Only, it is what Baudelaire means to Mr. Symons's generation; it is not what Baudelaire means to us. For one thing, we now are much better qualified to appreciate the very traditional character of Baudelaire's verse; we are nearer to Racine than is Mr. Symons; and if we translated Baudelaire ourselves we should bring out just those resemblances to Racine which disappear completely in Mr. Symons's translation. It is a pity that Mr. Symons has not translated some of the poems in

## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

which this affinity with Racine is most apparent.  
The poet who wrote

*Andromaque, des bras d'un grand époux tombée  
Vil bétail, sous la main du superbe Pyrrhus. . . .*

*De l'ancien Frascati vestale enamourée. . . .*

*Nos Pylades là-bas tendent leurs bras vers nous.  
'Pour rafraîchir ton coeur nage vers ton Electre!' . . .*

is not remote from the poet who wrote of '*La fille de Minos et Pasiphaë. . . .*' We can, however, call attention to passages where it seems to us that Mr. Symons has enveloped Baudelaire in the Swinburnian violet-coloured London fog of the 'nineties. His paraphrase of '*L'Invitation au Voyage*' is significant.

My child and my star,  
Let us wander afar. . . .

Baudelaire wrote

*Mon enfant, ma soeur,  
Songe à la douceur  
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble.*

The word *soeur* here is not, in my opinion, chosen merely because it rhymes with *douceur*; it is a moment in that sublimation of passion toward which Baudelaire was always striving; it needs a comment-

## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

ary out of his Correspondence, for instance the astonishing letter to Marie X . . . cited by Charles Du Bos.<sup>1</sup> (On this whole subject Du Bos, whose essay on Baudelaire is the finest study of Baudelaire that has been made, has some admirable words: *ce désir contemplatif qui n'a besoin que de la présence, et qui ne possède vraiment que parce qu'il ne possède pas.*) And further on, in the same poem, when we come to the magnificent lines

*Là tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté  
Luxe, calme et volupté*

we are surprised to receive from Mr. Symons

*There all is beauty, ardency  
Passion, rest and luxury.*

The only one of these words that is right is 'beauty'. Baudelaire did not, we may be sure, take these substantives at random, nor did he arrange them at random. It is not for nothing that he put *ordre* first; and if Mr. Symons had understood *notre* Baudelaire he would not have substituted—'ardency'! But order is positive, chaos is defect, and we imagine that Mr. Symons was not trying to *avoid* Order—he simply did not recognize it. We can see that Mr. Symons, trained in the verbal school of Swinburne, is simply anxious to get a nice sounding phrase; and we infer

<sup>1</sup> Charles Du Bos, *Approximations*, p. 219.

## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

that all that he found in Baudelaire was a nice sounding phrase. But Baudelaire was not a disciple of Swinburne: for Baudelaire every word counts.

Here is another passage where Mr. Symons seems to me merely to have made a smudgy botch. It is striking because it is Baudelaire in his most sardonic, bathetic vein—something which might be called strictly 'modern', and which should therefore (considering that Mr. Symons belongs to a younger generation than Baudelaire) have appealed to Mr. Symons. These are well-known lines from the 'Voyage à Cythère'.

*Quelle est cette île triste et noire? C'est Cythère,  
Nous dit-on, un pays fameux dans les chansons,  
Eldorado banal de tous les vieux garçons.  
Regardez, après tout, c'est une pauvre terre.*

Mr. Symons astounds us with the following:

*What is this sad dark Isle? It is Cythera whose birth  
Was famed in songs, made famous as the fashions  
Of the most ancient and adulterous passions,  
It is a beautiful and a barren earth.*

Here Mr. Symons's 'stretchèd metre', always reminiscent of Cynara, fits Baudelaire's deliberately broken alexandrines better than it does in many places (in many of the poems, one feels that Pope



## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

would have been better fitted than Mr. Symons). But such a mistranslation cannot be merely a confession of impotence to translate the words of Baudelaire into English; it expresses an impotence to *feel* the moods of Baudelaire—they can be expressed in English just as well as in French—an impotence to use words definitely, to use words at all unless they are the few poor counters of habitual and lazy sentiment. *Fashions and Passions*—how well we know them!

The important fact about Baudelaire is that he was essentially a Christian, born out of his due time, and a classicist, born out of his due time. In his verse technique, he is nearer to Racine than to Mr. Symons; in his sensibility, he is near to Dante and not without sympathy with Tertullian. But Baudelaire was not an æsthetic or a political Christian; his tendency to 'ritual', which Mr. Symons, with his highly acute but blind sensibility, has observed, springs from no attachment to the outward forms of Christianity, but from the instincts of a soul that was *naturaliter* Christian. And being the kind of Christian that he was, born when he was, he had to discover Christianity for himself. In this pursuit he was alone in the solitude which is only known to saints. To him the notion of Original Sin came spontaneously, and the need for prayer.

'Tout chez Baudelaire est fonction de son génie;

## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

or il n'y a rien dont ce génie puisse moins se passer que de Dieu,—d'un Dieu qui plutôt qu'objet de foi est réceptacle de prières,—j'irai jusqu'à dire d'un Dieu qu'on puisse prier sans croire en lui. . . . Cet incoercible besoin de prière au sein même de l'incrédulité,—signe majeur d'une âme marquée de christianisme, qui jamais ne lui échappera tout à fait. La notion de péché, et plus profondément encore le besoin de prière, telles sont les deux réalités souterraines qui paraissent appartenir à des gisements enfouis bien plus avant que ne l'est la foi elle-même. On se rappelle le mot de Flaubert: 'Je suis mystique au fond et je ne crois à rien'; Baudelaire et lui se sont toujours fraternellement compris.'

So far Charles Du Bos. Other essays, not so satisfactory as that of M. Du Bos, but recent and explanatory of Baudelaire as he is now understood, are 'Notre Baudelaire' by Stanislas Fumet, and 'La Vie Douleur de Baudelaire' by François Porché.

And Baudelaire came to attain the greatest, the most difficult, of the Christian virtues, the virtue of humility. Only by devoted study of the man and his work and his life can we appreciate the significance of that great passage in *Mon Coeur Mis à Nu*:

'Faire tous les matins ma prière à Dieu, réservoir de toute force et de toute justice, à mon père, à Mariette et à Poë, comme intercesseurs; les prier de me communiquer la force nécessaire pour accomplir

## BAUDELAIRE IN OUR TIME

tous mes devoirs, et d'octroyer à ma mère une vie assez longue pour jouir de ma transformation; travailler toute la journée, ou du moins tant que mes forces me le permettront; me fier à Dieu, c'est-à-dire à la Justice même, pour la réussite de mes projets; faire, tous les soirs, une nouvelle prière, pour demander à Dieu la vie et la force pour ma mère et pour moi; faire, de tout ce que je gagnerai, quatre parts,—une pour la vie courante, une pour mes créanciers, une pour mes amis et une pour ma mère; —obéir aux principes de la plus stricte sobriété, dont le premier est la suppression de tous les excitants, quels qu'ils soient.'

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## THE HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

It is proverbially easier to destroy than to construct; and as a corollary of this proverb, it is easier for readers to apprehend the destructive than the constructive side of an author's thought. More than this: when a writer is skilful at destructive criticism, the public is satisfied with that. If he has no constructive philosophy, it is not demanded; and if he has, it is overlooked. This is especially true when we are concerned with critics of society, from Arnold to the present day. All such critics are criticized from one common standard, and that the lowest: the standard of brilliant attack upon aspects of contemporary society which we know and dislike. It is the easiest standard to take. For the criticism deals with concrete things in our world which we know, and the writer may be merely echoing, in neater phrasing, our own thoughts; whereas the construction deals with

## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

things hard and unfamiliar. Hence the popularity of Mr. Mencken.

But there are more serious critics than Mr. Mencken, and of these we must ask in the end what they have to offer in place of what they denounce. M. Julien Benda, for instance, makes it a part of his deliberate programme to offer nothing; he has a romantic view of critical detachment which limits his interest. Mr. Wyndham Lewis is obviously striving courageously toward a positive theory, but in his published work has not yet reached that point. But in Professor Babbitt's latest book, *Democracy and Leadership*, the criticism is related to a positive theory and dependent upon it. This theory is not altogether expounded, but is partly assumed. What I wish to do in the present essay is to ask a few questions of Mr. Babbitt's constructive theory.

The centre of Mr. Babbitt's philosophy is the doctrine of humanism. In his earlier books we were able to accept this idea without analysis; but in *Democracy and Leadership*—which I take to be at this point the summary of his theory—we are tempted to question it. The problem of humanism is undoubtedly related to the problem of religion. Mr. Babbitt makes it very clear, here and there throughout the book, that he is unable to take the religious view—that is to say that he cannot accept any dogma or revelation; and that humanism is the

## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

*alternative* to religion. And this brings up the question: is this alternative any more than a *substitute*? and if a substitute, does it not bear the same relation to religion that 'humanitarianism' bears to humanism? Is it, in the end, a view of life that will work by itself, or is it a derivative of religion which will work only for a short time in history, and only for a few highly cultivated persons like Mr. Babbitt—whose ancestral traditions, furthermore, are Christian and who is, like many people, at the distance of a generation or so from definite Christian belief? Is it, in other words, durable beyond one or two generations?

Mr. Babbitt says, of the 'representatives of the humanitarian movement', that 'they wish to live on the naturalistic level, and at the same time to enjoy the benefits that the past had hoped to achieve as a result of some humanistic or religious discipline.'

The definition is admirable, but provokes us to ask whether, by altering a few words, we cannot arrive at the following statement about humanists: 'they wish to live on the humanistic level, and at the same time to enjoy the benefits that the past had hoped to achieve as a result of some religious discipline.'

If this transposition is justified, it means that the difference is only of one step: the humanitarian has

## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

suppressed the properly human, and is left with the animal; the humanist has suppressed the divine, and is left with a human element which may quickly descend again to the animal from which he has sought to raise it.

Mr. Babbitt is a stout upholder of tradition and continuity, and he knows, with all his immense and encyclopedic information, that the Christian religion is an essential part of the history of our race. Humanism and religion are thus, as historical facts, by no means parallel; humanism has been sporadic, but Christianity continuous. It is quite irrelevant to conjecture the possible development of the European races without Christianity—to imagine, that is, a tradition of humanism equivalent to the actual tradition of Christianity. For all we can say is that we should have been very different creatures, whether better or worse. Our problem being to form the future, we can only form it on the materials of the past; we must *use* our heredity, instead of denying it. The religious habits of the race are still very strong, in all places, at all times, and for all people. There is no humanistic habit: humanism is, I think, merely the state of mind of a few persons in a few places at a few times. To exist at all, it is dependent upon some other attitude, for it is essentially critical—I would even say parasitical. It has been, and can still be, of great value; but it will



## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

never provide showers of partridges or abundance of manna for the chosen peoples.

It is a little difficult to define humanism in Mr. Babbitt's terms, for he is very apt to line it up in battle order *with* religion *against* humanitarianism and naturalism; and what I am trying to do is to *contrast* it with religion. Mr. Babbitt is very apt to use the phrases like 'tradition humanistic and religious' which suggest that you could say also 'tradition humanistic *or* religious'. So I must make shift to define humanism as I can from a few of the examples that Mr. Babbitt seems to hold up to us.

I should say that he regarded Confucius, Buddha, Socrates and Erasmus as humanists (I do not know whether he would include Montaigne). It may surprise some to see Confucius and Buddha, who are popularly regarded as founders of religions, in this list. But it is always the human reason, not the revelation of the supernatural, upon which Mr. Babbitt insists. Confucius and Buddha are not in the same boat, to begin with. Mr. Babbitt of course knows infinitely more about both of these men than I do; but even people who know even less about them than I do, know that Confucianism endured by fitting in with popular religion, and that Buddhism endured by becoming as distinctly a *religion* as Christianity—recognizing a dependence of the human upon the divine.

## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

And finally, the attitude of Socrates and that of Erasmus toward the religion of their place and time were very different from what I take to be the attitude of Professor Babbitt. How far Socrates believed, and whether his legendary request of the sacrifice of a cock was merely gentlemanly behaviour or even irony, we cannot tell; but the equivalent would be Professor Babbitt receiving extreme unction, and that I cannot at present conceive. But both Socrates and Erasmus were content to remain critics, and to leave the religious fabric untouched. So that I find Mr. Babbitt's humanism to be very different from that of any of the humanists above mentioned.

This is no small point, but the question is a difficult one. It is not at all that Mr. Babbitt has *misunderstood* any of these persons, or that he is not fully acquainted with the civilizations out of which they sprang. On the contrary he knows all about them. It is rather, I think, that in his interest in the messages of individuals—messages conveyed in books—he has tended merely to neglect the conditions. The great men whom he holds up for our admiration and example are torn from their contexts of race, place and time. And in consequence, Mr. Babbitt seems to me to tear himself from his own context. His humanism is really something quite different from that of his exemplars, but (to my

## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

mind) alarmingly like very liberal Protestant theology of the nineteenth century: it is, in fact, a product—a by-product—of Protestant theology in its last agonies.

I admit that all humanists—as humanists—have been individualists. As humanists, they have had nothing to offer to the mob. But they have usually left a place, not only for the mob, but (what is more important) for the mob part of the mind in themselves. Mr. Babbitt is too rigorous and conscientious a Protestant to do that: hence there seems to be a gap between his own individualism (and indeed intellectualism, beyond a certain point, must be individualistic) and his genuine desire to offer something which will be useful to the American nation primarily and to civilization itself. But the historical humanist, as I understand him, halts at a certain point and admits that the reason will go no farther, and that it cannot feed on honey and locusts.

Humanism is either an alternative to religion, or is ancillary to it. To my mind, it always flourishes most when religion has been strong; and if you find examples of humanism which are anti-religious, or at least in opposition to the religious faith of the place and time, then such humanism is purely destructive, for it has never found anything to replace what it destroyed. Any religion, of course, is for ever in danger of petrification into mere ritual and



## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

habit, though ritual and habit be essential to religion. It is only renewed and refreshed by an awakening of feeling and fresh devotion, or by the critical reason. The latter may be the part of the humanists. But if so, then the function of humanism, though necessary, is secondary. You cannot make humanism itself into a religion.

What Mr. Babbitt, on one side, seems to me to be trying to do is to make humanism—his own form of humanism—work without religion. For otherwise, I cannot see the significance of his doctrine of self-control. This doctrine runs throughout his work, and sometimes appears as the 'inner check'. It appears as an alternative to both political and religious anarchy. In the political form it is more easily acceptable. As forms of government become more democratic, as the outer restraints of kingship, aristocracy, and class disappear, so it becomes more and more necessary, that the individual no longer controlled by authority or habitual respect should control himself. So far, the doctrine is obviously true and impregnable. But Mr. Babbitt seems to think also that the 'outer' restraints of an orthodox religion, as they weaken, can be supplied by the inner restraint of the individual over himself. If I have interpreted him correctly, he is thus trying to build a Catholic platform out of Protestant planks. By tradition an individualist, and jealous of the inde-



## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

pendence of individual thought, he is struggling to make something that will be valid for the nation, the race, the world.

The sum of a population of individuals, all ideally and efficiently checking and controlling themselves will never make a whole. And if you distinguish so sharply between 'outer' and 'inner' checks as Mr. Babbitt does, then there is nothing left for the individual to check himself by but his own private notions and his judgment, which is pretty precarious. As a matter of fact, when you leave the political field for the theological, the distinction between outer and inner becomes far from clear. Given the most highly organized and temporally powerful hierarchy, with all the powers of inquisition and punishment imaginable, still the idea of the religion is the *inner* control—the appeal not to a man's behaviour but to his soul. If a religion cannot touch a man's self, so that in the end he is controlling himself instead of being merely controlled by priests as he might be by policemen, then it has failed in its professed task. I suspect Mr. Babbitt at times of an instinctive dread of organized religion, a dread that it should cramp and deform the free operations of his own mind. If so, he is surely under a misapprehension.

And what, one asks, are all these millions, even these thousands, or the remnant of a few intelligent

## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

hundreds, going to control themselves *for*? Mr. Babbitt's critical judgment is exceptionally sound, and there is hardly one of his several remarks that is not, by itself, acceptable. It is the joints of his edifice, not the materials, that sometimes seem a bit weak. He says truly:

'It has been a constant experience of man in all ages that mere rationalism leaves him unsatisfied. Man craves in some sense or other of the word an enthusiasm that will lift him out of his merely rational self.'

But it is not clear that Mr. Babbitt has any other enthusiasm to offer except the enthusiasm for being lifted out of one's merely rational self by some enthusiasm. Indeed, if he can infect people with enthusiasm for getting even up to the level of their rational selves, he will accomplish a good deal.

But this seems to me just the point at which 'humanistic control' ends, if it gets that far. He speaks of the basis 'of religion and humanistic control' in Burke, but what we should like to know is the respective parts played by religion and humanism in this basis. And with all the references that Mr. Babbitt makes to the role of religion in the past, and all the connexions that he perceives between the decline of theology and the growth of the modern errors that he detests, he reveals himself as uncompromisingly detached from any religious belief, even the most purely 'personal':

## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

'To be modern has meant practically to be increasingly positive and critical, to refuse to receive anything on an authority "anterior, exterior and superior" to the individual. With those who still cling to the principle of outer authority I have no quarrel. I am not primarily concerned with them. I am myself a thoroughgoing individualist, writing for those who are, like myself, irrevocably committed to the modern experiment. In fact, so far as I object to the moderns at all, it is because they have not been sufficiently modern, or, what amounts to the same thing, have not been sufficiently experimental.'

Those of us who lay no claim to being modern may not be involved in the objection, but, as bystanders, we may be allowed to inquire where all this modernity and experimenting is going to lead. Is everybody to spend his time experimenting? And on what, and to what end? And if the experimenting merely leads to the conclusion that self-control is good, that seems a very frosty termination to our hunt for 'enthusiasm'. What is the higher will to *will*, if there is nothing either 'anterior, exterior or superior' to the individual? If this will is to have anything on which to operate it must be in relation to external objects and to objective values. Mr. Babbitt says:

'To give the first place to the higher will is only



## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

another way of declaring that life is an act of faith. One may discover on positive grounds a deep meaning in the old Christian tenet that we do not know in order that we may believe, but we believe in order that we may know.'

This is quite true; but if life is an act of faith, in what is it an act of faith? The Life-Forcers, with Mr. Bernard Shaw at their head, would say I suppose 'in Life itself'; but I should not accuse Mr. Babbitt of anything so silly as that. However, a few pages further on he gives something more definite to will: it is civilization.

The next idea, accordingly, to be examined is that of civilization. It seems, on the face of it, to mean something definite; it is in fact, merely a frame to be filled with definite objects, not a definite object itself. I do not believe that I can sit down for three minutes to will civilization without my mind wandering to something else. I do not mean that civilization is a mere word; the word means something quite real. But the minds of the individuals who can be said to 'have willed civilization' are minds filled with a great variety of objects of will, according to place, time, and individual constitution; what they have in common is rather a habit in the same direction than a will to civilization. And unless by civilization you mean material progress, cleanliness, etc.—which is not what Mr. Babbitt



## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

means; if you mean a spiritual and intellectual coordination on a high level, then it is doubtful whether civilization can endure without religion, and religion without a church.

I am not here concerned with the question whether such a 'humanistic' civilization as that aimed at by Professor Babbitt is or is not *desirable*; only with the question whether it is *feasible*. From this point of view the danger of such theories is, I think, the danger of collapse. For those who had not followed Mr. Babbitt very far, or who had felt his influence more remotely, the collapse would be back again into humanitarianism thinly disguised. For others who had followed him hungrily to the end and had found no hay in the stable, the collapse might well be into a Catholicism *without* the element of humanism and criticism, which would be a Catholicism of despair. There is a hint of this in Mr. Babbitt's own words:

'The choice to which the modern man will finally be reduced, it has been said, is that of being a Bolshevist or a Jesuit. In that case (assuming that by Jesuit is meant the ultramontane Catholic) there does not seem to be much room for hesitation. Ultramontane Catholicism does not, like Bolshevism, strike at the very root of civilization. In fact, under certain conditions that are already partly in sight, the Catholic Church may perhaps be the only

## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

institution left in the Occident that can be counted upon to uphold civilized standards. It may also be possible, however, to be a thoroughgoing modern and at the same time civilized. . . .'

The last sentence somehow seems to me to die away a little faintly. But the point is that Mr. Babbitt seems to be giving away to the Church in anticipation more than would many who are more concerned with it in the present than he. Mr. Babbitt is much more ultramontane than I am. One may feel a very deep respect and even love for the Catholic Church (by which I understand Mr. Babbitt means the hierarchy in communion with the Holy See); but if one studies its history and vicissitudes, its difficulties and problems past and present, one is struck with admiration and awe certainly, but is not the more tempted to place all the hopes of humanity on one institution.

But my purpose has been, not to predict a bad end for Mr. Babbitt's philosophy, but to point out the direction which I think it should follow if the obscurities of 'humanism' were cleared up. It should lead, I think, to the conclusion that the humanistic point of view is auxiliary to and dependent upon the religious point of view. For us, religion is of course Christianity; and Christianity implies, I think, the conception of the Church. It would be not only interesting but invaluable if Professor

## HUMANISM OF IRVING BABBITT

Babbitt, with his learning, his great ability, his influence, and his interest in the most important questions of the time, could reach this point. His influence might thus join with that of another philosopher of the same rank—Charles Maurras—and might, indeed, correct some of the extravagances of that writer.

Such a consummation is impossible. Professor Babbitt knows too much; and by that I do not mean merely erudition or information or scholarship. I mean that he knows too many religions and philosophies, has assimilated their spirit too thoroughly (there is probably no one in England or America who understands early Buddhism better than he) to be able to give himself to any. The result is humanism. I believe that it is better to recognize the weaknesses of humanism at once, and allow for them, so that the structure may not crash beneath an excessive weight; and so that we may arrive at an enduring recognition of its value for us, and of our obligation to its author.

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## RELIGION & LITERATURE

What I have to say is largely in support of the following propositions: Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint. In so far as in any age there is common agreement on ethical and theological matters, so far can literary criticism be substantive. In ages like our own, in which there is no such common agreement, it is the more necessary for Christian readers to scrutinize their reading, especially of works of imagination, with explicit ethical and theological standards. The 'greatness' of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards.<sup>1</sup>

We have tacitly assumed, for some centuries past,

<sup>1</sup> As an example of literary criticism given greater significance by theological interests, I would call attention to Theodor Haecker: *Virgil* (Sheed and Ward).

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

that there is *no* relation between literature and theology. This is not to deny that literature—I mean, again, primarily works of imagination—has been, is, and probably always will be judged by some moral standards. But moral judgements of literary works are made only according to the moral code accepted by each generation, whether it lives according to that code or not. In an age which accepts some precise Christian theology, the common code may be fairly orthodox: though even in such periods the common code may exalt such concepts as ‘honour’, ‘glory’ or ‘revenge’ to a position quite intolerable to Christianity. The dramatic ethics of the Elizabethan Age offers an interesting study. But when the common code is detached from its theological background, and is consequently more and more merely a matter of habit, it is exposed both to prejudice and to change. At such times morals are open to being altered *by* literature; so that we find in practice that what is ‘objectionable’ in literature is merely what the present generation is not used to. It is a commonplace that what shocks one generation is accepted quite calmly by the next. This adaptability to change of moral standards is sometimes greeted with satisfaction as an evidence of human perfectibility: whereas it is only evidence of what unsubstantial foundations people’s moral judgements have.

I am not concerned here with religious literature

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

but with the application of our religion to the criticism of any literature. It may be as well, however, to distinguish first what I consider to be the three senses in which we can speak of 'religious literature'. The first is that of which we say that it is religious 'literature' in the same way that we speak of 'historical literature' or of 'scientific literature'. I mean that we can treat the Authorized translation of the Bible, or the works of Jeremy Taylor, as literature, in the same way that we treat the historical writing of Clarendon or of Gibbon—our two great English historians—as literature; or Bradley's *Logic*, or Buffon's *Natural History*. All of these writers were men who, incidentally to their religious, or historical, or philosophic purpose, had a gift of language which makes them delightful to read to all those who can enjoy language well written, even if they are unconcerned with the objects which the writers had in view. And I would add that though a scientific, or historical, or theological, or philosophic work which is also 'literature', may become superannuated as anything but literature, yet it is not likely to be 'literature' unless it had its scientific or other value for its own time. While I acknowledge the legitimacy of this enjoyment, I am more acutely aware of its abuse. The persons who enjoy these writings *solely* because of their literary merit are essentially parasites; and we know that parasites, when they become too



## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

numerous, are pests. I could easily fulminate for a whole hour against the men of letters who have gone into ecstasies over 'the Bible as literature', the Bible as 'the noblest monument of English prose'. Those who talk of the Bible as a 'monument of English prose' are merely admiring it as a monument over the grave of Christianity. I must try to avoid the by-paths of my discourse: it is enough to suggest that just as the work of Clarendon, or Gibbon, or Buffon, or Bradley would be of inferior literary value if it were insignificant as history, science and philosophy respectively, so the Bible has had a *literary* influence upon English literature *not* because it has been considered as literature, but because it has been considered as the report of the Word of God. And the fact that men of letters now discuss it as 'literature' probably indicates the *end* of its 'literary' influence.

The second kind of relation of religion to literature is that which is found in what is called 'religious' or 'devotional' poetry. Now what is the usual attitude of the lover of poetry—and I mean the person who is a genuine and first-hand enjoyer and appreciator of poetry, not the person who follows the admirations of others—towards this department of poetry? I believe, all that may be implied in his calling it a *department*. He believes, not always explicitly, that when you qualify poetry as 'religious' you are



## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

indicating very clear limitations. For the great majority of people who love poetry, '*religious poetry*' is a variety of *minor* poetry: the religious poet is not a poet who is treating the whole subject matter of poetry in a religious spirit, but a poet who is dealing with a confined part of this subject matter: who is leaving out what men consider their major passions, and thereby confessing his ignorance of them. I think that this is the real attitude of most poetry lovers towards such poets as Vaughan, or Southwell, or Crashaw, or George Herbert, or Gerard Hopkins.

But what is more, I am ready to admit that up to a point these critics are right. For there is a kind of poetry, such as most of the work of the authors I have mentioned, which is the product of a special religious awareness, which may exist without the general awareness which we expect of the major poet. In some poets, or in some of their works, this general awareness may have existed; but the preliminary steps which represent it may have been suppressed, and only the end-product presented. Between these, and those in which the religious or devotional genius represents the *special* and limited awareness, it may be very difficult to discriminate. I do not pretend to offer Vaughan, or Southwell, or George Herbert, or Hopkins as major poets: I feel sure that the first three, at least, are poets of this limited awareness. They are not great religious poets

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

in the sense in which Dante, or Corneille, or Racine, even in those of their plays which do not touch upon Christian themes, are great Christian religious poets. Or even in the sense in which Villon and Baudelaire, with all their imperfections and delinquencies, are Christian poets. Since the time of Chaucer, Christian poetry (in the sense in which I shall mean it) has been limited in England almost exclusively to minor poetry.

I repeat that when I am considering Religion and Literature, I speak of these things only to make clear that I am not concerned primarily with Religious Literature. I am concerned with what should be the relation between Religion and all Literature. Therefore the third type of 'religious literature' may be more quickly passed over. I mean the literary works of men who are sincerely desirous of forwarding the cause of religion: that which may come under the heading of Propaganda. I am thinking, of course, of such delightful fiction as Mr. Chesterton's *Man Who Was Thursday*, or his *Father Brown*. No one admires and enjoys these things more than I do; I would only remark that when the same effect is aimed at by zealous persons of less talent than Mr. Chesterton the effect is negative. But my point is that such writings do not enter into any serious consideration of the relation of Religion and Literature: because they are conscious operations in a world in which it is

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

assumed that Religion and Literature are not related. It is a conscious and limited relating. What I want is a literature which should be *unconsciously*, rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian: because the work of Mr. Chesterton has its point from appearing in a world which is definitely not Christian.

I am convinced that we fail to realize how completely, and yet how irrationally, we separate our literary from our religious judgements. If there could be a complete separation, perhaps it might not matter: but the separation is not, and never can be, complete. If we exemplify literature by the novel—for the novel is the form in which literature affects the greatest number—we may remark this gradual secularization of literature during at least the last three hundred years. Bunyan, and to some extent Defoe, had moral purposes: the former is beyond suspicion, the latter may be suspect. But since Defoe the secularization of the novel has been continuous. There have been three chief phases. In the first, the novel took the Faith, in its contemporary version, for granted, and omitted it from its picture of life. Fielding, Dickens and Thackeray belong to this phase. In the second, it doubted, worried about, or contested the Faith. To this phase belong George Eliot, George Meredith and Thomas Hardy. To the third phase, in which we are living, belong nearly



## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

all contemporary novelists except Mr. James Joyce. It is the phase of those who have never heard the Christian Faith spoken of as anything but an anachronism.

Now, do people in general hold a definite opinion, that is to say religious or anti-religious; and do they read novels, or poetry for that matter, with a separate compartment of their minds? The common ground between religion and fiction is behaviour. Our religion imposes our ethics, our judgement and criticism of ourselves, and our behaviour toward our fellow men. The fiction that we read affects our behaviour towards our fellow men, affects our patterns of ourselves. When we read of human beings behaving in certain ways, with the approval of the author, who gives his benediction to this behaviour by his attitude toward the result of the behaviour arranged by himself, we can be influenced towards behaving in the same way.<sup>1</sup> When the contemporary novelist is an individual thinking for himself in isolation, he may have something important to offer to those who are able to receive it. He who is alone may speak to the individual. But the majority of novelists are persons drifting in the stream, only a little faster. They have some sensitiveness, but little intellect.

<sup>1</sup> Here and later I am indebted to Montgomery Belgion. *The Human Parrot* (chapter on The Irresponsible Propagandist).



## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

We are expected to be broadminded about literature, to put aside prejudice or conviction, and to look at fiction as fiction and at drama as drama. With what is inaccurately called 'censorship' in this country—with what is much more difficult to cope with than an official censorship, because it represents the opinions of individuals in an irresponsible democracy, I have very little sympathy; partly because it so often suppresses the wrong books, and partly because it is little more effective than Prohibition of Liquor; partly because it is one manifestation of the desire that state control should take the place of decent domestic influence; and wholly because it acts only from custom and habit, not from decided theological and moral principles. Incidentally, it gives people a false sense of security in leading them to believe that books which are *not* suppressed are harmless. Whether there is such a thing as a harmless book I am not sure: but there very likely are books so utterly unreadable as to be incapable of injuring anybody. But it is certain that a book is not harmless merely because no one is consciously offended by it. And if we, as readers, keep our religious and moral convictions in one compartment, and take our reading merely for entertainment, or on a higher plane, for æsthetic pleasure, I would point out that the author, whatever his conscious intentions in writing, in practice recognizes no such distinctions. The

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

author of a work of imagination is trying to affect us wholly, as human beings, whether he knows it or not; and we are affected by it, as human beings, whether we intend to be or not. I suppose that everything we eat has some other effect upon us than merely the pleasure of taste and mastication; it affects us during the process of assimilation and digestion; and I believe that exactly the same is true of anything we read.

The fact that what we read does not concern merely something called our *literary taste*, but that it affects directly, though only amongst many other influences, the whole of what we are, is best elicited, I think, by a conscientious examination of the history of our individual literary education. Consider the adolescent reading of any person with some literary sensibility. Everyone, I believe, who is at all sensible to the seductions of poetry, can remember some moment in youth when he or she was completely carried away by the work of one poet. Very likely he was carried away by several poets, one after the other. The reason for this passing infatuation is not merely that our sensibility to poetry is keener in adolescence than in maturity. What happens is a kind of inundation, of invasion of the undeveloped personality, the empty (swept and garnished) room, by the stronger personality of the poet. The same thing may happen at a later age to persons who have

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

not done much reading. One author takes complete possession of us for a time; then another; and finally they begin to affect each other in our mind. We weigh one against another; we see that each has qualities absent from others, and qualities incompatible with the qualities of others: we begin to be, in fact, critical; and it is our growing critical power which protects us from excessive possession by any one literary personality. The good critic—and we should all try to be critics, and not leave criticism to the fellows who write reviews in the papers—is the man who, to a keen and abiding sensibility, joins wide and increasingly discriminating reading. Wide reading is not valuable as a kind of hoarding, an accumulation of knowledge, or what sometimes is meant by the term ‘a well-stocked mind’. It is valuable because in the process of being affected by one powerful personality after another, we cease to be dominated by any one, or by any small number. The very different views of life, cohabiting in our minds, affect each other, and our own personality asserts itself and gives each a place in some arrangement peculiar to ourself.

It is simply not true that works of fiction, prose or verse, that is to say works depicting the actions, thoughts and words and passions of imaginary human beings, *directly* extend our knowledge of life. Direct knowledge of life is knowledge directly in



## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

relation to ourselves, it is our knowledge of *how* people behave in general, of *what* they are like in general, in so far as that part of life in which we ourselves have participated gives us material for generalization. Knowledge of life obtained through fiction is only possible by another stage of self-consciousness. That is to say, it can only be a knowledge of other people's knowledge of life, not of life itself. So far as we are taken up with the happenings in any novel in the same way in which we are taken up with what happens under our eyes, we are acquiring at least as much falsehood as truth. But when we are developed enough to say: 'This is the view of life of a person who was a good observer within his limits, Dickens, or Thackeray, or George Eliot, or Balzac; but he looked at it in a different way from me, because he was a different man; he even selected rather different things to look at, or the same things in a different order of importance, because he was a different man; so what I am looking at is the world as seen by a particular mind'—then we are in a position to gain something from reading fiction. We are learning *something* about life from these authors direct, just as we learn something from the reading of history direct; but these authors are only really helping us when we can see, and allow for, their differences from ourselves.

Now what we get, as we gradually grow up and



## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

read more and more, and read a greater diversity of authors, is a variety of views of life. But what people commonly assume, I suspect, is that we gain this experience of other men's views of life only by 'improving reading'. This, it is supposed, is a reward we get by applying ourselves to Shakespeare, and Dante, and Goethe, and Emerson, and Carlyle, and dozens of other respectable writers. The rest of our reading for amusement is merely killing time. But I incline to come to the alarming conclusion that it is just the literature that we read for 'amusement', or 'purely for pleasure' that may have the greatest, and least suspected influence upon us. It is the literature which we read with the least effort that can have the easiest and most insidious influence upon us. Hence it is that the influence of popular novelists, and of popular plays of contemporary life, requires to be scrutinized most closely. And it is chiefly *contemporary* literature that the majority of people ever read in this attitude of 'purely for pleasure', of pure passivity.

The relation of what I have been saying to the subject announced for my discourse should now be a little more apparent. Though we may read literature merely for pleasure, of 'entertainment' or of 'æsthetic enjoyment', this reading never affects simply a sort of special sense: it affects us as entire human beings; it affects our moral and religious existence.

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

And I say that while individual modern writers of eminence can be improving, contemporary literature as a whole tends to be degrading. And that even the effect of the better writers, in an age like ours, may be degrading to some readers; for we must remember that what a writer does to people is not necessarily what he intends to do. It may be only what people are capable of having done to them. People exercise an unconscious selection, in being influenced. A writer like D. H. Lawrence may be in his effect either beneficial or pernicious. I am not even sure that I have not had some pernicious influence myself.

At this point I anticipate a rejoinder from the liberal-minded, from all those who are convinced that if everybody says what he thinks, and does what he likes, things will somehow, by some automatic compensation and adjustment, come right in the end. 'Let everything be tried,' they say, 'and if it is a mistake, then we shall learn by experience.' This argument might have some value, if we were always the same generation upon earth; or if, as we know to be not the case, people ever learned much from the experience of their elders. These liberals are convinced that only by what is called unrestrained individualism, will truth ever emerge. Ideas, views of life, they think, issue distinct from independent heads, and in consequence of their knocking vio-

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

lently against each other, the fittest survive, and truth rises triumphant. Anyone who dissents from this view must be either a mediævalist, wishful only to set back the clock, or else a fascist, and probably both.

If the mass of contemporary authors were really individualists, every one of them inspired Blakes, each with his separate vision, and if the mass of the contemporary public were really a mass of *individuals* there might be something to be said for this attitude. But this is not, and never has been, and never will be. It is not only that the reading individual to-day (or at any day) is not enough an individual to be able to absorb all the 'views of life' of all the authors pressed upon us by the publishers' advertisements and reviewers, and to be able to arrive at wisdom by considering one against another. It is that the contemporary authors are not individuals enough either. It is not that the world of separate individuals of the liberal democrat is undesirable; it is simply that this world does not exist. For the reader of contemporary literature is not, like the reader of the established great literature of all time, exposing himself to the influence of divers and contradictory personalities; he is exposing himself to a mass movement of writers who, each of them, think that they have something individually to offer, but are really all working together in the same direction. And there



## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

never was a time, I believe, when the reading public was so large, or so helplessly exposed to the influences of its own time. There never was a time, I believe, when those who read at all, read so many more books by living authors than books by dead authors; there never was a time so completely parochial, so shut off from the past. There may be too many publishers; there are certainly too many books published; and the journals ever incite the reader to 'keep up' with what is being published. Individualistic democracy has come to high tide: and it is more difficult to-day to be an individual than it ever was before.

Within itself, modern literature has perfectly valid distinctions of good and bad, better and worse: and I do not wish to suggest that I confound Mr. Bernard Shaw with Mr. Noel Coward, Mrs. Woolf with Miss Mannin. On the other hand, I should like it to be clear that I am not defending a 'high'-brow against a 'low'-brow literature. What I do wish to affirm is that the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, that it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life: of something which I assume to be our primary concern.

I do not want to give the impression that I have delivered a mere fretful jeremaid against contempor-



## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

ary literature. Assuming a common attitude between you, or some of you, and myself, the question is not so much, what is to be done about it? as, how should we behave towards it?

I have suggested that the liberal attitude towards literature will not work. Even if the writers who make their attempt to impose their 'view of life' upon us were really distinct individuals, even if we as readers were distinct individuals, what would be the result? It would be, surely, that each reader would be impressed, in his reading, merely by what he was previously prepared to be impressed by; he would follow the 'line of least resistance', and there would be no assurance that he would be made a better man. For literary judgement we need to be acutely aware of two things at once: of 'what we like', and of 'what we *ought* to like'. Few people are honest enough to know either. The first means knowing what we really feel: very few know that. The second involves understanding our shortcomings; for we do not really know what we ought to like unless we also know why we ought to like it, which involves knowing why we don't yet like it. It is not enough to understand what we ought to be, unless we know what we are; and we do not understand what we are, unless we know what we ought to be. The two forms of self-consciousness, knowing what we are and what we ought to be, must go together.

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

It is our business, as readers of literature, to know what we like. It is our business, as Christians, *as well as* readers of literature, to know what we ought to like. It is our business as honest men not to assume that whatever we like is what we ought to like; and it is our business as honest Christians not to assume that we do like what we ought to like. And the last thing I would wish for would be the existence of two literatures, one for Christian consumption and the other for the pagan world. What I believe to be incumbent upon all Christians is the duty of maintaining consciously certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world; and that by these criteria and standards everything that we read must be tested. We must remember that the greater part of our current reading matter is written for us by people who have no real belief in a supernatural order, though some of it may be written by people with individual notions of a supernatural order which are not ours. And the greater part of our reading matter is coming to be written by people who not only have no such belief, but are even ignorant of the fact that there are still people in the world so 'backward' or so 'eccentric' as to continue to believe. So long as we are conscious of the gulf fixed between ourselves and the greater part of contemporary literature, we are more or less protected from being harmed by it, and are in a

## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

position to extract from it what good it has to offer us.

There are a very large number of people in the world to-day who believe that all ills are fundamentally economic. Some believe that various specific economic changes alone would be enough to set the world right; others demand more or less drastic changes in the social as well, changes chiefly of two opposed types. These changes demanded, and in some places carried out, are alike in one respect, that they hold the assumptions of what I call Secularism: they concern themselves only with changes of a temporal, material, and external nature; they concern themselves with morals only of a collective nature. In an exposition of one such new faith I read the following words:

‘In our morality the one single test of any moral question is whether it impedes or destroys in any way the power of the individual to serve the State. (The individual) must answer the questions: “Does this action injure the nation? Does it injure other members of the nation? Does it injure my ability to serve the nation?” And if the answer is clear on all those questions, the individual has absolute liberty to do as he will.’

Now I do not deny that this is a kind of morality, and that it is capable of great good within limits; but I think that we should all repudiate a morality which



## RELIGION AND LITERATURE

had no higher ideal to set before us than that. It represents, of course, one of the violent reactions we are witnessing, against the view that the community is solely for the benefit of the individual; but it is equally a gospel of this world, and of this world alone. My complaint against modern literature is of the same kind. It is not that modern literature is in the ordinary sense 'immoral' or even 'amoral'; and in any case to prefer that charge would not be enough. It is simply that it repudiates, or is wholly ignorant of, our most fundamental and important beliefs; and that in consequence its tendency is to encourage its readers to get what they can out of life while it lasts, to miss no 'experience' that presents itself, and to sacrifice themselves, if they make any sacrifice at all, only for the sake of tangible benefits to others in this world either now or in the future. We shall certainly continue to read the best of its kind, of what our time provides; but we must tirelessly criticize it according to our own principles, and not merely according to the principles admitted by the writers and by the critics who discuss it in the public press.



## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

I assume that we are all of one mind about the deplorable consequences of the schisms of Christianity, and are convinced of the vital importance of the reunion of Christendom. We are also aware that if Christendom were reunited to-morrow it would be far from coextensive with even the European world. Against it would be not only that considerable body of influence which is positively anti-Christian, but all the forces which we denominate Liberal, embracing all people who believe that the public affairs of this world and those of the next have nothing to do with each other; who believe that in a perfect world those who like golf could play golf, and those who like religion could go to church. We, on the other hand, feel convinced, however darkly, that our spiritual faith should give us some guidance in temporal matters; that if it does not, the fault is our own; that morality rests upon

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

religious sanction, and that the social organization of the world rests upon moral sanction; that we can only judge of temporal values in the light of eternal values. We are committed to what in the eyes of the world must be a desperate belief, that a Christian world-order, *the* Christian world-order, is ultimately the only one which, from any point of view, will work.

So far, in fact, as we individually concern ourselves with present social, political, economic problems, we as Catholics are committed to a much more searching analysis both of the problems and of every solution put forward, than the ordinary member of the public, or even the ordinary specialist, feels called upon to make. It is not merely that we exact of any system, before we give it our adherence, that it shall perform functions to which the ordinary system maker is indifferent: that, for instance, it shall recognize the place of ecclesiastical authority. The relation between the natural and the supernatural is not to be settled by a Concordat. What I have in mind is that only the Christian thinker is compelled to examine all his premisses, and try to start from the fundamental terms and propositions. I am unqualified to discuss either political science or economics; and the latter science is to me more incomprehensible than mathematics. Nevertheless, I cannot help believing that the majority of actual practitioners of

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

both political and economic science, in their very effort to be scientific, to limit precisely, that is, the field of their activity, make assumptions which they are not only not entitled to make, but which they are not always conscious of making. All one's views and theories, of course, have some ultimate relation to the kind of man one is. But only the Catholic, in practice, is under the manifest obligation to find out what sort of man he is—because he is under the obligation to improve that man according to definite ideals and standards. The non-Catholic, certainly the non-Christian philosopher, feeling no obligation to alter himself, and therefore no cogent need to understand himself, is apt to be under the sway of his prejudices, his social background, his individual tastes. So, I dare say, are we: but we at least, I hope, admit our duty to try to subdue them. This assertion may appear extremely presumptuous. But I speak not so much from my knowledge of economics, which is less than sketchy, as from my occasional acquaintance with economists.

I feel, then, no confidence in any proposal for putting the world in order until the proposer has answered satisfactorily the question: what is the good life? Very often I fear, he can give no better answer than pointing to the kind of life that he, as a natural man and a separated individual, happens to like. Very few people, indeed, want to be better than



## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

they are; or, to put it in more consecrated terms, hunger and thirst after righteousness. And what we happen to like as individuals outside of the main current which is the Catholic tradition is apt to be what our own sort of people within a narrow limit of place and time have been happening to like. We are likely to assume as eternal truths things that in fact have only been taken for granted by a small body of people or for a very short period of time. Instead of bringing to bear the whole history of our civilization upon our particular emergencies we may be merely applying recent or local ways of thinking. A really satisfactory working philosophy of social action, as distinct from devices from getting ourselves out of a hole at the moment, requires not merely science but wisdom. It is perhaps too much to expect of any man to possess both specialized scientific power and wisdom: we cannot expect economists to help us until we know what we want of them. Ultimately our views, our selection among the solutions offered us, will differ—setting aside the part played by prejudice and self-interest—according to our views of human nature. This is not a matter of science, but of wisdom; and wisdom is only gained in two ways, and well gained only through both: a study of human nature through history, the actions of men in the past and the best that they have thought and written, and a study



CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER  
through observation and experience of the men and women about us as we live.

I believe that the Catholic Church, with its inheritance from Israel and from Greece, is still, as it always has been, the great repository of wisdom. Wisdom seems to be a commodity less and less available in educational institutions; for the methods and ideals coming into vogue in modern education, scientific specialization on the one hand, and a treatment of humanities either as a kind of pseudo-science or as superficial culture, are not calculated to cultivate a disposition towards wisdom; something which, certainly, educational institutions cannot teach, because it cannot be learnt in the time or wholly in such surroundings, but which they can teach us to desire, which they can teach us how to go about acquiring. The modern world separates the intellect and the emotions. What can be reduced to a science, in its narrow conception of 'science', whatever can be handled by sharpness of wit mastering a limited and technical material, it respects; the rest may be a waste of uncontrolled behaviour and immature emotion. I wish that the classical conception of wisdom might be restored, so that we might not be left wholly to the political scientist on the one hand, or the demagogue on the other. For the ordinary politician, wisdom is identified with expediency, for the political scientist it disappears in theory; but

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

wisdom, including political wisdom, can neither be abstracted to a science, nor reduced to a dodge; nor can you supply it by forming a committee composed of scientists and dodgers in equal numbers. And human wisdom, I add finally, cannot be separated from divine wisdom without tending to become merely worldly wisdom, as vain as folly itself.

My purpose so far has been simply to put forward that we, as Catholics, cannot simply accept or reject the solutions offered by specialized theorists in the world, according to whether they appear on the surface to admit of a place for us and our faith. We have to criticize the moral assumptions, explicit or implicit, and recognize what are, from our point of view, the limitations and errors of their authors. And we ourselves, I suspect, are liable to fall into boobytraps of our own setting. We are in danger always of translating notions too literally from one order to another. I discern two chief pitfalls. The ideas of authority, of hierarchy, of discipline and order, applied inappropriately in the temporal sphere, may lead us into some error of absolutism or impossible theocracy. Or the ideas of humanity, brotherhood, equality before God, may lead us to affirm that the Christian can only be a socialist. Heresy is always possible; and where there is one possible heresy, there are always at least two; and when two doctrines contradict each other, we do

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

not always remember that both may be wrong. And heresy may extend, of course, into affairs of this world which people do not ordinarily judge according to such standards: we might expect to find it, for instance, in some forms of Fascism as well as in some forms of Socialism. It is inevitable, in any organization of men which does not recognize the Christian foundations of society. And we need not be surprised to find two antithetical heresies existing in conjunction. The conception of individual liberty, for instance, must be based upon the unique importance of every single soul, the knowledge that every man is ultimately responsible for his own salvation or damnation, and the consequent obligation of society to allow every individual the opportunity to develop his full humanity. But unless this humanity is considered always in relation to God, we may expect to find an excessive love of created beings, in other words humanitarianism, leading to a genuine oppression of human beings in what is conceived by other human beings to be their interest. I consider that only Christian and Catholic thought, operating in the sphere of sociology, can save us from these extremes which only create worse confusion when they meet. The heresy is often more plausible, more apparently rational, and also more expedient at the moment, than the true faith. For wisdom is not arrived at by a strictly logical conclusion from



## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

agreed premisses; you have often no means of compelling by reason those to accept who do not want to accept. It is obvious that the second half of the Summary of the Law is a delusion and a cheat if you erase the first half; but how will you prove that to the enthusiast and the system-builder? It is something which we know to be true, by what may indeed be called worldly wisdom: for true worldly wisdom leads up to, and is fulfilled in, and is incomplete without, *other-worldly* wisdom.

I am not for a moment suggesting that theories of what should be done to save the world, either general or particularized, are inevitably wrong or useless when they have not been built on Christian and Catholic foundations. But let us take, for example, an institution about which most of us know a little and a very few, of whom I am not one, know a great deal. I am not denying the utility of the League of Nations either in the years of its existence or in the future when I suggest that it should have been obvious at the start that the League could never fulfil the aspirations of its founders. The whole conception seems to me to date from the period of Rousseau, and to illustrate that exaggerated faith in human reason to which people of undisciplined emotions are prone. The assumption was that you could take European society, in the disorganized and hysterical state in which it was in 1918, accepting rather than



## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

deprecating the nationalism which was already developed and which was bound to develop further, impose upon it a fictitious federal union, provide a central machinery with a democratic organization in which not only powerful nations and weak, but important and unimportant nations, more and less civilized nations, were to meet in nominal approximation to equality, and expect reasonableness and enlightened self-interest to settle all difficulties. I may be wrong, but I should be surprised if I was altogether wrong. And what then is the League of Nations to-day? It is a machine; I dare say, like most machines the component parts of which are human beings associated in committee, that it has too many parts; but still an efficient machine for the lesser tasks for which men see fit to employ it. It has settled minor disputes between minor members in such a way as to preserve what was most vital: peace and the self-respect of both parties. In matters upon which the majority of civilized nations is still civilized enough to maintain, or to be obliged to profess, common principles, and in which the interest of no nation is to the damage of another, but the interests of all are identical as against lawless elements within each—such as Drug Traffic and Slavery, black or white—in matters like these, I believe, the League of Nations may well justify, and probably has already justified its founda-

tion and its expense. But in matters in which powerful interests and passions are at work, it must rely, like all democratic government, upon a balance of interests, rather than upon common interest, upon prudential ethics, not religious ethics. It is Modernism in the political field. I am not attacking the League, but seeking for a definition of its limitations: it can function all the better, if we recognize what these limitations are. But it would be better still if its inventors had themselves seen these limitations: for what sentimentalism initiates, cynicism and intrigue can exploit.

The Catholic should have high ideals—or rather, I should say *absolute* ideals—and moderate expectations: the heretic, whether he call himself fascist, or communist, or democrat or rationalist, always has low ideals and great expectations. For I say that all ambitions of an earthly paradise are informed by low ideals. I am not condemning all schemes for the betterment of mankind which are not the product of Catholic thinking; but only affirming that all such schemes, as well as our own when we are occupied with immediate temporal emergencies, must be submitted to such examination as only Catholic wisdom can supply. Confronted with any definitely anti-Christian system of society, we are sure that such a system, because founded on falsehood, cannot ever work properly. And by 'proper working' we imply

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

also in the long run happiness on the lowest normal human level. Compared with any degree of Christian society that has ever been actual, there have been, or are said to have been, primitive societies in which were found a far higher average of pleasure and a far lower average of pain: advocates of sex reform are always referring us to the manners of the happy Trobriand Islanders. In comparison with any primitive society we can only say that the quality of pleasure and happiness prevailing in such society is too low to attract any civilized person: even the lowest of civilized individuals cannot adapt himself to such society without deteriorating and incidentally, in many cases, corrupting the natives with him. But it is not with the choice between civilized and primitive society that we actually have to deal; it is with the choice between Christian, non-Christian and anti-Christian orders. With the second of these we are all familiar, and we know how it works. And the third, we are sure, will not work either.

What we have to aim at is not merely an order which will not contradict the Christian order, an order in which Christians and non-Christians can accommodate themselves in perfect harmony; any programme that a Catholic can envisage must aim at the conversion of the whole world. The only positive unification of the world, we believe, is re-



## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

ligious unification; by which we do not mean simply universal submission to one world-wide ecclesiastical hierarchy, but cultural unity in religion—which is not the same thing as cultural uniformity. And any general scheme of international harmony put forward as a substitute for religious unity is likely to be more of a menace than a hope. It will distract men's minds from the real issues, it will soothe them with an illusory sense of virtue and security; and like every structure built only by human reason, will eventually fall beneath the impact of human passions, leaving only a bitter and unnecessary disillusionment. It is only the Catholic who cannot be disillusioned.

Our duty, it seems to me, with regard to all purely secular attempts to set the world right, is to welcome them for what they are worth, when they have any good in them, and at the same time proclaim their limitations and the danger of expecting more of them than such human inventions can perform. We have been undeceived about developments which at one time or another were expected to bring unity to the world. At one time, progress and enlightenment were expected to do it; and the spread of democracy and Parliamentary institutions. I am afraid that this meant, so far as Britain and America were concerned, a belief that the one thing necessary was for the rest of the world to model itself or be modelled



## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

by force upon Britain or America respectively. The fact is that it is very difficult for any of us to know in what ways we are superior to other peoples, and in what ways merely different. At a later time, what was called the conquest of space was expected, by increasing facilities of communication between peoples, to favour understanding. The conquest of space has made it possible for peoples to fight from greater distances, but in other ways has not done all that it should: in America, thanks to the conquest of space, you can get fresh vegetables and fruit at any time of the year, and none of it has any flavour. Standardization was expected to unify peoples, though perhaps at the price of monotony; standardization has tended to make peoples alike where they had better be different, and you can hear the same kind of music from any wireless station in Europe; but to exist in amity peoples need something more in common than a dance-step, or a universal mastery of Ford cars. More recently, we have often heard that the economic and financial interdependence of nations makes harmony and common action, if not inevitable, at least imperative: we must agree, or we shall perish. You can put a variety of savage beasts together in one cage, and tell them that they must tolerate each other and share their food equably or they will perish: but it would be simpler and more humane to confine them in different cages according

to their kind. Such interdependence of peoples of widely different emotional organization begins to appear now to be merely multiplying occasions of discord; and to hope for anything from it is the illusory reward of those who continue to perform oblations to that deceitful goddess of Reason who was only born some hundred and fifty years ago.

It is interesting to observe that some of the more astute of the children of this economic world are beginning to suspect that internationalism can be the enemy of international amity. Sardonic critics have even suggested that travel bureaux ought to be suppressed, except perhaps for the purpose of facilitating religious pilgrimages; for the more peoples see of each other, these philosophers maintain, the more opportunity they have for misunderstanding and disliking each other: everyone remembers the occasion on which he was swindled, treated rudely, or given a bad meal and an uncomfortable bed whilst on his travels. But a more moderate critic, for whom I have considerable respect, Mr. Maynard Keynes, has recently put forward some suggestions in this direction in two interesting articles in *The New Statesman*. Mr. Keynes deprecates the system under which every small investor is partially dependent on income from industries, often at the ends of the earth, of which he has no knowledge and over which he has no control; he would like to see management

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

and ownership brought closer together. It has long seemed to me that many international enterprises, as well as international politics, had swollen to such magnitude that they were beyond the power of the human mind to control efficiently, safely, and with due respect to the interests of everyone concerned. We have several notable cases in recent years in which the character of the man in power, rather than his mind, has broken down under the strain: to the hardship or ruin of almost innumerable victims. And this desire for a simplification of international relations, to which Mr. Keynes has given voice, seems to me to have some connexion with the yearning towards regionalism which we have observed springing up spontaneously in various parts of the world; in America, in Scotland, and even I have been told in North Germany. With such movement, after we have deducted the political nonsense and the sentimental-retrospective-literary nonsense, I am instinctively in sympathy; as I also am, again entirely on instinct, for I have no gift whatever for abstruse thinking, with some kind of credit-reform and with distributism. I have little hope for the future of America until that country falls apart into its natural components, divisions which would not be simply those of the old North and South and still less those of the forty-eight states.

I imagine that my general sympathies and tenden-



## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

cies, in the matter of social and economic reform, are similar to those which individual members of this School have expressed. But of one thing I feel more and more sure, and that is that the Catholic cannot commit himself utterly and absolutely to any one form of temporal order. I do not mean by this that he must remain aloof, or refuse to champion any cause or adopt any course to which reason, sensibility and wisdom converge to point; but that his attitude must be always relative, that he must never devote the same passion to any Kingdom of this world that he should render to the Kingdom of God. There are many possible occasions on which he may suitably give up his life for temporal causes, but never his sense of values; remembering the Platonic hint that nothing in this world is wholly serious—that 'nothing' including of course the prolongation of one's own existence in the world. I do not mean either that I wish to draw, or would allow to be drawn, a line between spiritual and temporal affairs. It is not, I trust, merely because we happen to be Catholics *and* public-spirited individuals, that we are interested in public and international affairs, but because our Faith is of a kind that compels us to the latter interest. Accordingly, if we are to contribute our share, not merely as citizens, but as Catholic citizens, we must not be content to peruse blue books, newspapers, and political and economic treatises; we



CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER  
must first of all become thoroughly conversant with our own theology.

I make this reservation, and draw this distinction, because I feel that the outside world will always be ready to grasp at any excuse to pretend that Catholics, and especially Anglo-Catholics, are committed to some social programme which becomes practically identified with their Faith. Perhaps these misunderstandings cancel out: we are qualified as bigoted reactionaries, or as reckless socialists, according to the disposition of the hostile critic and the tendencies of some individual Catholic whom he has in mind. I think that the virtue of tolerance is greatly overestimated, and I have no objection to being called a bigot myself; but that is an individual concern. But I am the more careful in the matter, because some years ago I made, wisely or unwisely, a brief announcement of faith religious, political and literary which became too easily quotable. It may have given some critics the impression that for me all these three were inextricable and *of equal importance*.

In any public causes to which we may devote ourselves, we are always likely to find ourselves allied with non-Catholics of good will; and we have sometimes to remind ourselves of the very different pre-suppositions which can underlie a common action. I have already suggested that the world is liable to

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

set its ideals too low and its expectations too high; that it is apt to put a blind faith in mechanism; that it is apt to hope that an intelligent recognition of material interests and possibilities, arrived at by conferences and reports, will set things right. It expects too much from vague benevolence, and refuses to face the fact that no great change can ever come without a moral conversion. It lives in the constant expectation of some material miracle, and follows a will o' the wisp which to some eyes takes the shape of Prosperity, and to others that of Revolution.

This moral laziness and evasion is something that we must combat. Here again, however, I do not wish to contrast the Church with the world as if they were everywhere in conflict, or as if the actual Church were an entity with its own policy in every contingency, or as if the world was always wrong and the Church always right. The more minute the particular, the more possibility of legitimate divergency of opinion amongst Churchmen; and in any case I have wished to draw attention to the obligation on the part of church people who interest themselves in public affairs, to make as sure as they can of their foundations and motives, and to distinguish in any programme of action that they may devise, between eternal premisses and the conclusions which they draw and the devices which they invent. The majority of devout Protestants who interest them-

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

selves in public well-doing apply their faith to their works without examination and their specific Christianity is visible chiefly in their disinterestedness, self-sacrifice and emotional fervour. The Catholic with a more definite theology, and I hope a greater practice in self-examination, will make more realistic observation of what he is doing and why; a Catholic training is, I believe, more calculated to ensure a proper balance between head and heart. I believe also that Catholics should, in any questions of foreign relations, be able to feel a sympathy with foreign points of view which is much better worth having and more effective than diffuse good-will. I believe that there is a Catholic habit of thought and of feeling, which is a bond between Catholics of the most diverse races, nations, classes and cultures; I have sometimes been sadly aware of it, on the other hand, with English and American friends of indeterminate religious allegiance, by being brought up suddenly in conversation with the realization that our presuppositions, what we took for granted in discussing some particular problem, were utterly different. Let us hope that these differences between our own people and ourselves will eventually disappear, and meanwhile and always take advantage of such understanding as is possible elsewhere.

It is possible that the period in which we live—if



## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

we could see it from a distant enough perspective—may be one of progressive decline of civilization. That is a form of speculation in which I am not interested. There is a certain saving egotism—if we choose to call it egotism—which prevents us from despair so long as we believe that there is anything that we can do which may possibly help to improve matters. It is part of the function of a school like this to clarify our minds about the possible points of immediate action, as well as on first principles. I hope that I have not failed to affirm that there may always be schemes, initiated by non-Christian and non-Catholic minds with purely temporal motives and aims, to which we can give unqualified support; and by supporting them give them a firmer justification and inform them with Christian truth. There are, surely, ways of reorganizing the mechanisms of this world, which in bringing about a greater degree of justice and peace on that plane will also facilitate the development of the Christian life and the salvation of souls. We recognize that possibility in every work of slum-clearance and housing reform. And whereas no man may excuse his own shortcomings by the difficulties he finds in living a Christian life in the actual world, but must rather consider every difficulty as an opportunity, we must do all that we can to reduce the difficulties for other people. One of these difficulties, of which I have not spoken, but



## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

which you will no doubt discuss during the next few days, is War. I think that no one can doubt that war in the form in which we have known it in our time, while it gives a few affirmed Christians the opportunity to realize their virtue in action—whether in submission or in protest—and while it often brings out amazing natural virtues, is on the whole degrading. Yet I have no more sympathy with the purely humanitarian attitude toward war than with the humanitarian attitude toward anything else: I should not enjoy the prospect of abolishing suffering without at the same time perfecting human nature. In face of any naturally horrifying phenomenon like war we must measure the suffering, direct and indirect, against the spiritual goods which may come of suffering. We may find that the proportion of futile suffering, and of that kind of suffering which makes men worse rather than better, which abates their human dignity and deadens their sense of responsibility, is far too high; and that the total effect is at best one of futility. What we have to concern ourselves with primarily is the causes in modern society, in our industrial and financial machinery it may be, which bring about the *kind* of war which we have experienced; and to give our adherence to all alterations in that machinery which tend to remove the motives. We do not, I suppose, deny that society is very deeply affected morally and spiritually by

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

material conditions, even by a machinery which it has constructed piecemeal and with short-sighted aims. This is not to accept any doctrine of determinism, for it means no more than that society, and the majority of individuals composing it, are only imperfectly conscious of what they are doing, directed by impure motives and aiming at false goods.

In the long run, I believe that the Catholic Faith is also the only practical one. That does not mean that we are provided with an infallible calculating machine for knowing what should be done in any contingency; it means perpetual new thinking to meet perpetually changing situations. The attitude of the Catholic towards any form of organization, national or international, must always be a specific attitude towards a specific situation. There is a fallacy in democracy, for instance, in assuming that a majority of natural and unregenerate men is likely to want the right things; there may also be a fallacy in dictatorship in so far as it represents a willingness of a majority to surrender responsibility. In nations so self-contained as to be able to ignore each other, culture and perhaps even blood would become too inbred; but if the races of the world mixed until racial strains and local cultures disappeared, the result might be still more disastrous. There must always be a middle way, though sometimes a devious way when natural obstacles have to be cir-

## CATHOLICISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

cumvented; and this middle way will, I think, be found to be the way of orthodoxy; a way of mediation, but never, in those matters which permanently matter, a way of compromise.

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## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

It might seem that about Blaise Pascal, and about the two works on which his fame is founded, everything that there is to say had been said. The details of his life are as fully known as we can expect to know them; his mathematical and physical discoveries have been treated many times; his religious sentiment and his theological views have been discussed again and again; and his prose style has been analysed by French critics. But Pascal is one of those writers who will be and who must be studied afresh by men in every generation. It is not he who changes, but we who change. It is not our knowledge of him that increases, but our world that alters and our attitudes towards it. The history of human opinions of Pascal and of men of his stature is a part of the history of humanity. That indicates his permanent importance.

The few facts of Pascal's life which need to be recalled in examining the *Pensées*, are as follows. He

## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

was born at Clermont in Auvergne, in 1623. His family were people of substance of the upper middle class. His father was a government official, who was able to leave, when he died, a sufficient patrimony to his one son and his two daughters. In 1631 the father moved to Paris, and a few years later took up another government post at Rouen. Wherever he lived, the elder Pascal seems to have mingled with some of the best society, and with men of eminence in science and the arts. Blaise was educated entirely by his father at home. He was exceedingly precocious, indeed excessively precocious, for his application to studies in childhood and adolescence impaired his health and is held responsible for his death at thirty-nine. Prodigious, though not incredible stories are preserved, especially of his precocity in mathematics. His mind was active rather than accumulative; he showed from his earliest years that disposition to find things out for himself, which has characterized the infancy of Clerk Maxwell and other scientists. Of his later discoveries in physics there is no need for mention here; it must only be remembered that he counts as one of the greatest physicists and mathematicians of all time; and that his discoveries were made during the years when most scientists are still apprentices.

The elder Pascal, Etienne, was a sincere Christian. About 1646 he fell in with some representatives of

## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

the religious revival within the Church which has become known as Jansenism—after Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, whose theological work is taken as the origin of the movement. This period is usually spoken of as the movement of Pascal's 'first conversion'. The word 'conversion', however, is too forcible to be applied at this point to Blaise Pascal himself. The family had always been devout, and the younger Pascal, though absorbed in his scientific work, never seems to have been afflicted with infidelity. His attention was then directed, certainly, to religious and theological matters; but the term 'conversion' can only be applied to his sisters—the elder, already Madame Périer, and particularly the younger, Jacqueline, who at that time conceived a vocation for the religious life. Pascal himself was by no means disposed to renounce the world. After the death of the father in 1650 Jacqueline, a young woman of remarkable strength and beauty of character, wished to take her vows as a sister of Port-Royal, and for some time her wish remained unfulfilled owing to the opposition of her brother. His objection was on the purely worldly ground that she wished to make over her patrimony to the Order; whereas while she lived with him, their combined resources made it possible for him to live more nearly on a scale of expense congenial to his tastes. He liked, in fact, not only to mix with the best society, but to keep a



## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

coach and horses—six horses is the number at one time attributed to his carriage. Though he had no legal power to prevent his sister from disposing of her property as she elected the amiable Jacqueline shrank from doing so without her brother's willing approval. The Mother Superior, Mère Angélique—herself an eminent personage in the history of this religious movement—finally persuaded the young novice to enter the order without the satisfaction of bringing her patrimony with her; but Jacqueline remained so distressed by this situation that her brother finally relented.

So far as is known, the worldly life enjoyed by Pascal during this period can hardly be qualified as 'dissipation', and certainly not as 'debauchery'. Even gambling may have appealed to him chiefly as affording a study of mathematical probabilities. He appears to have led such a life as any cultivated intellectual man of good position and independent means might lead and consider himself a model of probity and virtue. Not even a love-affair is laid at his door, though he is said to have contemplated marriage. But Jansenism, as represented by the religious society of Port-Royal, was morally a Puritan movement within the Church, and its standards of conduct were at least as severe as those of any Puritanism in England or America. The period of fashionable society, in Pascal's life is, how-



## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

ever, of great importance in his development. It enlarged his knowledge of men and refined his tastes; he became a man of the world and never lost what he had learnt; and when he turned his thoughts wholly towards religion, his worldly knowledge was a part of his composition which is essential to the value of his work.

Pascal's interest in society did not distract him from scientific research; nor did this period occupy much space in what is a very short and crowded life. Partly his natural dissatisfaction with such a life, once he had learned all it had to teach him, partly the influence of his saintly sister Jacqueline, partly increasing suffering as his health declined, directed him more and more out of the world and to thoughts of eternity. And in 1654 occurs what is called his 'second conversion', but which might be called his conversion simply.

He made a note of his mystical experience, which he kept always about him, and which was found, after his death, sewn into the coat which he was wearing. The experience occurred on 23rd November, 1654, and there is no reason to doubt its genuineness unless we choose to deny all mystical experience. Now, Pascal was not a mystic, and his works are not to be classified amongst mystical writings; but what can only be called mystical experience happens to many men who do not become mystics. The work

## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

which he undertook soon after, the *Lettres écrites à un provincial*, is a masterpiece of religious controversy at the opposite pole from mysticism. We know quite well that he was at the time when he received his illumination from God in extremely poor health; but it is a commonplace that some forms of illness are extremely favourable, not only to religious illumination, but to artistic and literary composition. A piece of writing meditated, apparently without progress, for months or years, may suddenly take shape and word; and in this state long passages may be produced which require little or no retouch. I have no good word to say for the cultivation of automatic writing as the model of literary composition; I doubt whether these moments *can* be cultivated by the writer; but he to whom this happens assuredly has the sensation of being a vehicle rather than a maker. No masterpiece can be produced whole by such means: but neither does even the higher form of religious inspiration suffice for the religious life; even the most exalted mystic must return to the world, and use his reason to employ the results of his experience in daily life. You may call it communion with the Divine, or you may call it a temporary crystallization of the mind. Until science can teach us to reproduce such phenomena at will, science cannot claim to have explained them; and they can be judged only by their fruits.

## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

From that time until his death, Pascal was closely associated with the society of Port-Royal which his sister Jacqueline, who predeceased him, had joined as a *religieuse*; the society was then fighting for its life against the Jesuits. Five propositions, judged by a committee of cardinals and theologians at Rome to be heretical, were found to put forward in the work of Jansenius; and the society of Port-Royal, the representative of Jansenism among communities, suffered a blow from which it never revived. It is not the place here to review the bitter controversy and conflict; the best account, from the point of view of a critic of genius who took no side, who was neither Jansenist nor Jesuit, Christian nor infidel, is that in the great book of Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*. And in this book the parts devoted to Pascal himself are among the most brilliant pages of criticism that Sainte-Beuve ever wrote. It is sufficient to notice that the next occupation of Pascal, after his conversion, was to write these eighteen 'Letters', which as prose are of capital importance in the foundation of French classical style, and which as polemic are surpassed by none, not by Demosthenes, or Cicero, or Swift. They have the limitation of all polemic and forensic: they persuade, they seduce, they are unfair. But it is also unfair to assert that, in these *Letters to a Provincial*, Pascal was attacking the Society of Jesus in itself. He was attacking rather a



## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

particular school of casuistry which relaxed the requirements of the Confessional; a school which certainly flourished amongst the Society of Jesus, at that time, and of which the Spaniards Escobar and Molina are the most eminent authorities. He undoubtedly abused the art of quotation, as a polemical writer is likely to do; but there were abuses for him to abuse; and he did the job thoroughly. His *Letters* must not be called theology. Academic theology was not a department in which Pascal was versed; when necessary, the fathers of Port-Royal came to his aid. The *Letters* are the work of one of the finest mathematical minds of any time, and of a man of the world who addressed, not theologians, but the world in general—all of the cultivated and many of the less cultivated of the French laity; and with this public they made an astonishing success.

During this time Pascal never wholly abandoned his scientific interests. Though in his religious writings he composed slowly and painfully, and revised often, in matters of mathematics his mind seemed to move with consummate natural ease and grace. Discoveries and inventions sprang from his brain without effort; among the minor devices of this later period, the first omnibus service in Paris is said to owe its origin to his inventiveness. But rapidly failing health, and absorption in the great work he had in mind, left him little time



## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

and energy during the last two years of his life.

The plan of what we call the *Pensées* formed itself about 1660. The completed book was to have been a carefully constructed defence of Christianity, a true Apology and a kind of Grammar of Assent, setting forth the reasons which will convince the intellect. As I have indicated before, Pascal was not a theologian, and on dogmatic theology had recourse to his spiritual advisers. Nor was he indeed a systematic philosopher. He was a man with an immense genius for science, and at the same time a natural psychologist and moralist. As he was a great literary artist, his book would have been also his own spiritual autobiography; his style, free from all diminishing idiosyncracies, was yet very personal. Above all, he was a man of strong passions; and his intellectual passion for truth was reinforced by his passionate dissatisfaction with human life unless a spiritual explanation could be found.

We must regard the *Pensées* as merely the first notes for a work which he left far from completion; we have, in Sainte-Beuve's words, a tower of which the stones have been laid on each other, but not cemented, and the structure unfinished. In early years his memory had been amazingly retentive of anything that he wished to remember; and had it not been impaired by increasing illness and pain, he probably would not have been obliged to set down

## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

these notes at all. But taking the book as it is left to us, we still find that it occupies a unique place in the history of French literature and in the history of religious meditation.

To understand the method which Pascal employs, the reader must be prepared to follow the process of the mind of the intelligent believer. The Christian thinker—and I mean the man who is trying consciously and conscientiously to explain to himself the sequence which culminates in faith, rather than the public apologist—proceeds by rejection and elimination. He finds the world to be so and so; he finds its character inexplicable by any non-religious theory: among religions he finds Christianity, and Catholic Christianity, to account most satisfactorily for the world and especially for the moral world within; and thus, by what Newman calls 'powerful and concurrent' reasons, he finds himself inexorably committed to the dogma of the Incarnation. To the unbeliever, this method seems disingenuous and perverse: for the unbeliever is, as a rule, not so greatly troubled to explain the world to himself, nor so greatly distressed by its disorder; nor is he generally concerned (in modern terms) to 'preserve values'. He does not consider that if certain emotional states, certain development of character, and what in the highest sense can be called 'saintliness' are inherently and by inspection known to be good, then the satis-

## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

factory explanation of the world must be an explanation which will admit the 'reality' of these values. Nor does he consider such reasoning admissible; he would, so to speak, trim his values according to his cloth, because to him such values are of no great value. The unbeliever starts from the other end, and as likely as not with the question: Is a case of human parthenogenesis credible? and this he would call going straight to the heart of the matter. Now Pascal's method is, on the whole, the method natural and right for the Christian; and the opposite method is that taken by Voltaire. It is worth while to remember that Voltaire, in his attempt to refute Pascal, has given once and for all the type of such refutation; and that later opponents of Pascal's *Apology for the Christian Faith* have contributed little beyond psychological irrelevancies. For Voltaire has presented, better than anyone since, what is the unbelieving point of view; and in the end we must all choose for ourselves between one point of view and another.

I have said above that Pascal's method is 'on the whole' that of the typical Christian apologist; and this reservation was directed at Pascal's belief in miracles, which plays a larger part in his construction than it would in that, at least, of the modern Catholic. It would seem fantastic to accept Christianity because we first believe the Gospel miracles to be



## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

**true**, and it would seem impious to accept it primarily because we believe more recent miracles to be true; we accept the miracles, or some miracles, to be true because we believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ: we found our belief in the miracles on the Gospel, not our belief in the Gospel on the miracles. But it must be remembered that Pascal had been deeply impressed by a contemporary miracle, known as the miracle of the Holy Thorn: a thorn reputed to have been preserved from the Crown of Our Lord was pressed upon an ulcer which quickly healed. Sainte-Beuve, who as a medical man felt himself on solid ground, discusses fully the possible explanation of this apparent miracle. It is true that the miracle happened at Port-Royal, and that it arrived opportunely to revive the depressed spirits of the community in its political afflictions; and it is likely that Pascal was the more inclined to believe a miracle which was performed upon his beloved sister. In any case, it probably led him to assign a place to miracles, in his study of faith, which is not quite that which we should give to them ourselves.

Now the great adversary against whom Pascal set himself, from the time of his first conversations with M. de Saci at Port-Royal, was Montaigne. One cannot destroy Pascal, certainly; but of all authors Montaigne is one of the least destructible. You could as well dissipate a fog by flinging hand-



## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

grenades into it. For Montaigne is a fog, a gas, a fluid, insidious element. He does not reason, he insinuates, charms, and influences; or if he reasons, you must be prepared for his having some other design upon you than to convince you by his argument. It is hardly too much to say that Montaigne is the most essential author to know, if we would understand the course of French thought during the last three hundred years. In every way, the influence of Montaigne was repugnant to the men of Port-Royal. Pascal studied him with the intention of demolishing him. Yet, in the *Pensées*, at the very end of his life, we find passage after passage and the slighter they are the more significant, almost 'lifted' out of Montaigne, down to a figure of speech or a word. The parallels<sup>1</sup> are most often with the long essay of Montaigne called *Apologie de Raymond Sébond*—an astonishing piece of writing upon which Shakespeare also probably drew in *Hamlet*. Indeed, by the time a man knew Montaigne well enough to attack him, he would already be thoroughly infected by him.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. the use of the simile of the *couvreur*. For comparing parallel passages, the edition of the *Pensées* by Henri Massis (*A la cité des livres*) is better than the two-volume edition of Jacques Chevalier (Gabalda). It seems just possible that in the latter edition, and also in his biographical study (*Pascal*; by Jacques Chevalier, English translation, published by Sheed and Ward), M. Chevalier is a little over-zealous to demonstrate the perfect orthodoxy of Pascal.

## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

It would, however, be grossly unfair to Pascal, to Montaigne, and indeed to French literature, to leave the matter at that. It is no diminution of Pascal, but only an aggrandizement of Montaigne. Had Montaigne been an ordinary life-sized sceptic, a small man like Anatole France, or even a greater man like Renan, or even like the greatest sceptic of all, Voltaire, this 'influence' would be to the discredit of Pascal; but if Montaigne had been no more than Voltaire, he could not have affected Pascal at all. The picture of Montaigne which offers itself first to our eyes, that of the original and independent solitary 'personality', absorbed in amused analysis of himself, is deceptive. Montaigne's is no *limited* Pyrrhonism, like that of Voltaire, Renan, or France. He exists, so to speak, on a plan of numerous concentric circles, the most apparent of which is the small inmost circle, a personal puckish scepticism which can be easily aped if not imitated. But what makes Montaigne a very great figure is that he succeeded, God knows how—for Montaigne very likely did not know that he had done it—it is not the sort of thing that men *can* observe about themselves, for it is essentially bigger than the individual's consciousness—he succeeded in giving expression to the scepticism of *every* human being. For every man who thinks and lives by thought must have his own scepticism, that which stops at the question,

## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

that which ends in denial, or that which leads to faith and which is somehow integrated into the faith which transcends it. And Pascal, as the type of one kind of religious believer, which is highly passionate and ardent, but passionate only through a powerful and regulated intellect, is in the first sections of his unfinished Apology for Christianity facing unflinchingly the demon of doubt which is inseparable from the spirit of belief.

There is accordingly something quite different from an influence which would prove Pascal's weakness; there is a real affinity between his doubt and that of Montaigne; and through the common kinship with Montaigne Pascal is related to the noble and distinguished line of French moralists, from La Rochefoucauld down. In the honesty with which they face the *données* of the actual world this French tradition has a unique quality in European literature, and in the seventeenth century Hobbes is crude in comparison.

Pascal is a man of the world among ascetics, and an ascetic among men of the world; he had the knowledge of worldliness and the passion of asceticism, and in him the two are fused into an individual whole. The majority of mankind is lazy-minded, incurious, absorbed in vanities, and tepid in emotion, and is therefore incapable of either much doubt or much faith; and when the ordinary man calls



## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

himself a sceptic or an unbeliever, that is ordinarily a simple pose, cloaking a disinclination to think anything out to a conclusion. Pascal's disillusioned analysis of human bondage is sometimes interpreted to mean that Pascal was really and finally an unbeliever, who, in his despair, was incapable of enduring reality and enjoying the heroic satisfaction of the free man's worship of nothing. His despair, his disillusion, are, however, no illustration of personal weakness; they are perfectly objective, because they are essential moments in the progress of the intellectual soul; and for the type of Pascal they are the analogue of the drought, the dark night, which is an essential stage in the progress of the Christian mystic. A similar despair, when it is arrived at by a diseased character or an impure soul, may issue in the most disastrous consequences though with the most superb manifestations; and thus we get *Gulliver's Travels*; but in Pascal we find no such distortion; his despair is in itself more terrible than Swift's, because our heart tells us that it corresponds exactly to the facts and cannot be dismissed as mental disease; but it was also a despair which was a necessary prelude to, and element in, the joy of faith.

I do not wish to enter any further than necessary upon the question of the heterodoxy of Jansenism; and it is no concern of this essay whether the Five Propositions condemned at Rome were really



maintained by Jansenius in his book *Augustinus*, or whether we should deplore or approve the consequent decay (indeed with some persecution) of Port-Royal. It is impossible to discuss the matter without becoming involved as a controversialist either for or against Rome. But in a man of the type of Pascal—and the type always exists—there is, I think, an ingredient of what may be called Jansenism of temperament, without identifying it with the Jansenism of Jansenius and of other devout and sincere, but not immensely gifted doctors.<sup>1</sup> It is accordingly needful to state in brief what the dangerous doctrine of Jansenius was, without advancing too far into theological refinements. It is recognized in Christian theology—and indeed on a lower plane it is recognized by all men in affairs of daily life—that free-will of the natural effort and ability of the individual man and also supernatural *grace*, a gift accorded we know not quite how, are both required, in co-operation, for salvation. Though numerous theologians have set their wits at the problem, it ends in a mystery which we can perceive but not finally decipher. At least, it is obvious that, like any doctrine a slight excess or deviation to one side or the other will precipitate a heresy. The Pelagians, who were

<sup>1</sup> The great man of Port-Royal was of course Saint-Cyran, but anyone who is interested will certainly consult, first of all, the book of Sainte-Beuve mentioned.

## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

refuted by St. Augustine, emphasized the efficacy of human effort and belittled the importance of supernatural grace. The Calvinists emphasized the degradation of man through Original Sin, and considered mankind so corrupt that the will was of no avail; and thus fell into the doctrine of predestination. It was upon the doctrine of grace according to St. Augustine that the Jansenists relied; and the *Augustinus* of Jansenius was presented as a sound exposition of the Augustinian views.

Heresies are never antiquated, because they forever assume new forms. For instance, the insistence upon good works and 'service' which is preached from many quarters, or the simple faith that any one who lives a good and useful life need have no 'morbid' anxieties about salvation, is a form of Pelagianism. On the other hand, one sometimes hears enounced the view that it will make no real difference if all the traditional religious sanctions for moral behaviour break down, because those who are born and bred to be nice people will always prefer to behave nicely, and those who are not will behave otherwise in any case: and this is surely a form of predestination—for the hazard of being born a nice person or not is as uncertain as the gift of grace.

It is likely that Pascal was attracted as much by the fruits of Jansenism in the life of Port-Royal as by the doctrine itself. This devout, ascetic, thorough-

## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

going society, striving heroically in the midst of a relaxed and easy-going Christianity, was formed to attract a nature so concentrated, so passionate, and so thoroughgoing as Pascal's. But the insistence upon the degraded and helpless state of man, in Jansenism, is something also to which we must be grateful, for to it we owe the magnificent analysis of human motives and occupations which was to have constituted the early part of his book. And apart from the Jansenism which is the work of a not very eminent bishop who wrote a Latin treatise which is now unread, there is also, so to speak, a Jansenism of the individual biography. A moment of Jansenism may naturally take place, and take place rightly, in the individual; particularly in the life of a man of great and intense intellectual powers, who cannot avoid seeing through human beings and observing the vanity of their thoughts and of their avocations, their dishonesty and self-deception, the insincerity of their emotions, their cowardice, the pettiness of their real ambitions.<sup>1</sup> Actually, considering that

<sup>1</sup> Cette négligence en une affaire ou il s'agit d'eux-mêmes, de leur éternité, de leur tout, m'irrite plus qu'elle ne m'attendrit; elle m'étonne et m'épouvante, c'est un monstre pour moi. Je ne dis pas ceci par le zèle pieux d'une dévotion spirituelle. J'entends au contraire qu'on doit avoir ce sentiment par un principe d'intérêt humain et par un intérêt d'amour-propre: il ne faut pour cela que voir ce que voient les personnes les moins éclairées. *Pensées*: ed. Massis, p. 29.



## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

much greater maturity is required for these qualities, than for any mathematical or scientific greatness, how easily his brooding on *the misery of man without God* might have encouraged in him the sin of spiritual pride, the *concupiscence de l'esprit*: and how fast a hold he has of humility!

And although Pascal brings to his work the same powers which he exerted in science, it is not as a scientist that he presents himself. He does not seem to say to the reader: I am one of the most distinguished scientists of the day: I understand many matters which will always be mysteries to you, and through science I have come to the Faith; you therefore who are not initiated into science ought to have faith if I have it. He is fully aware of the difference of subject-matter; and his famous distinction between the *esprit de géométrie* and the *esprit de finesse* is one to ponder over.

*En l'un, les principes sont palpables, mais éloignés de l'usage commun; de sorte qu'on a peine à tourner la tête de ce côté-là, manque d'habitude: mais pour peu qu'on l'y tourne, on voit les principes à plein; et il faudrait avoir tout à fait l'esprit faux pour mal raisonner sur des principes si gros qu'il est presque impossible qu'ils échappent.*

*Mais dans l'esprit de finesse, les principes sont dans l'usage commun et devant les yeux de tout le monde. On n'a que faire de tourner la tête, ni de se faire violence; il*



## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

*n'est question que d'avoir bonne vue, mais il faut l'avoir bonne; car les principes sont si déliés et en si grand nombre, qu'il est presque impossible qu'il n'en échappe. Or, l'omission d'un principe mène à l'erreur; ainsi, il faut avoir la vue bien nette pour tous les principes, et ensuite l'esprit juste pour ne pas raisonner faussetment sur des principes connus.*

It is the just combination of the scientist, the *honnête homme*, and the religious nature with a passionate craving for God, that makes Pascal unique. He succeeds where Descartes fails; for in Descartes the element of *esprit de géométrie* is excessive.<sup>1</sup> And in a few phrases about Descartes, in the present book, Pascal laid his finger on the place of weakness.

*Je ne puis pardonner à Descartes; il aurait bien voulu, dans toute sa philosophie, se pouvoir passer de Dieu; mais il n'a pu s'empêcher de lui faire donner une chiquenaude, pour mettre le monde en mouvement; après cela, il n'a plus que faire de Dieu.*

He who reads this book will observe at once its fragmentary nature; but only after some study will perceive that the fragmentariness lies in the expression more than in the thought. The 'thoughts' can-

<sup>1</sup> For a brilliant criticism of the errors of Descartes from a theological point of view the reader is referred to *Three Reformers* by Jacques Maritain (translation published by Sheed and Ward).

## THE PENSEES OF PASCAL

not be detached from each other and quoted as if each were complete in itself. *Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point*, how often one has heard that quoted, and quoted often to the wrong purpose!<sup>1</sup> For this is by no means an exaltation of the 'heart' over the 'head', a defence of unreason. The heart, in Pascal's terminology, is itself truly rational if it is truly the heart. For him, in theological matters which seemed to him much larger, more difficult, and more important than scientific matters, the whole personality is involved.

We cannot quite understand any of the parts, fragmentary as they are, without some understanding of the whole. Capital, for instance, is his analysis of the *three orders*: the order of nature, the order of mind, and the order of charity. These three are *discontinuous*; the higher is not implicit in the lower as in an evolutionary doctrine it would be.<sup>2</sup> In this distinction Pascal offers much about which the modern world would do well to think. And indeed, because of his unique combination and balance of qualities, I know of no religious writer more pertinent to our time. The great mystics, like St. John of the Cross,

<sup>1</sup> And those who have quoted *C'est là ma place au soleil* have often forgotten to add *Voilà le commencement et l'image de l'usurpation de toute la terre*.

<sup>2</sup> An important modern theory of discontinuity, suggested partly by Pascal, is sketched in the collected fragments of *Speculations* by T. E. Hulme (Kegan Paul).

## THE *PENSEES* OF PASCAL

are primarily for readers with a special determination of purpose; the devotional writers, such as St. François de Sales, are primarily for those who already feel consciously desirous of the love of God; the great theologians are for those interested in theology. But I can think of no Christian writer, not Newman even, more to be commended than Pascal to those who doubt, but who have the mind to conceive, and the sensibility to feel, the disorder, the futility, the meaninglessness, the mystery of life and suffering, and who can only find peace through a satisfaction of the whole being

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## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

Questions of education are frequently discussed as if they bore no relation to the social system in which and for which the education is carried on. This is one of the commonest reasons for the unsatisfactoriness of the answers. It is only within a particular social system that a system of education has any meaning. If education to-day seems to deteriorate, if it seems to become more and more chaotic and meaningless, it is primarily because we have no settled and satisfactory arrangement of society, and because we have both vague and diverse opinions about the kind of society we want. Education is a subject which cannot be discussed in a void: our questions raise other questions, social, economic, financial, political. And the bearings are on more ultimate problems even than these: to know what we want in education we must know what we want in general, we must derive our

## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

theory of education from our philosophy of life. The problem turns out to be a religious problem.

One might almost speak of a *crisis* of education. There are particular problems for each country, for each civilization, just as there are particular problems for each parent; but there is also a general problem for the whole civilized world, and for the uncivilized so far as it is being taught by its civilized superiors; a problem which may be as acute in Japan, in China or in India as in Britain or Europe or America. The progress (I do not mean the extension) of education for several centuries has been from one aspect a drift, from another aspect a push; for it has tended to be dominated by the idea of *getting on*. The individual wants more education, not as an aid to the acquisition of wisdom but in order to get on; the nation wants more in order to get the better of other nations, the class wants it to get the better of other classes, or at least to hold its own against them. Education is associated therefore with technical efficiency on the one hand, and with rising in society on the other. Education becomes something to which everybody has a 'right', even irrespective of his capacity; and when everyone gets it—by that time, of course, in a diluted and adulterated form—then we naturally discover that education is no longer an infallible means of getting on, and people turn to another fallacy: that of 'education for leisure'—

## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

without having revised their notions of 'leisure'. As soon as this precious motive of snobbery evaporates, the zest has gone out of education; if it is not going to mean more money, or more power over others, or a better social position, or at least a steady and respectable job, few people are going to take the trouble to acquire education. For deteriorate it as you may, education is still going to demand a good deal of drudgery. And the majority of people are incapable of enjoying leisure—that is, unemployment *plus* an income and a status of respectability—in any but pretty simple forms—such as balls propelled by hand, by foot, and by engines or tools of various types; in playing cards; or in watching dogs, horses or other men engage in feats of speed or skill. The uneducated man with an empty mind, if he be free from financial anxiety or narrow limitation, and can obtain access to golf-clubs, dance halls, etc., is, for all I can see, as well equipped to fill his leisure contentedly as is the educated man.

The inadequacy of most people's notions of education is revealed whenever there is any public discussion on the subject of raising the school age. To dismiss as irrelevant the miserable stop-gap idea that raising the school-leaving age will diminish unemployment—a mere confession of inability to solve a different problem—it is assumed by most people (and there are always a great many people



## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

ready to discuss the problem) that more education—that is to say more years of education—would be a good thing ‘if the nation could afford it’. Of course the nation could afford it, if it is such a good thing as all that. But no one stops to consider what is this education of which no one can have too much; or whether the society in which more of this education is a good thing is necessarily a good society. If, for instance, the ‘nation’, or the people composing it, have only a little money, should we not assure ourselves first that our elementary education is already so good that no money could improve it, before we attempt a more ambitious programme? (Anyone who has taught children even for a few weeks knows that the size of a class makes an immense difference to the amount you can teach. Fifteen is an ideal number; twenty is the maximum; with thirty much less can be done; with more than thirty most teachers’ first concern is simply to keep order, and the clever children creep at the pace of the backward.)

The first task of anyone who might be imagined as occupying a dictatorial position in the education of a country should obviously be to see that elementary education is as good as it can be made; and then proceeding forward make sure that no one received *too much* education, limiting the numbers treated to ‘higher education’ to a third (let us



## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

say) of those receiving that treatment to-day. (I do not want a dictator even in education, but it is sometimes convenient to employ a hypothetical dictator in illustration.) For one of the potential causes of deterioration of the universities is the deterioration lower down. The universities have to teach what they can to the material they can get: nowadays they even teach *English* in England. American universities, ever since Charles William Eliot and his contemporary 'educators', have tried to make themselves as big as possible in a mad competition for numbers: it is very much easier to turn a little university into a big one than to reduce the size of one that has grown too big. And after Eliot had taught America that a university should be as big as possible (and I have seen one that boasted an enrolment of 18,000 students—including, I must explain, evening classes) America grew very rich—that is to say, it produced a considerable number of millionaires, and the next generation set itself to an equally mad programme of building, erecting within a short time a great variety of imposing, though in some places rather hastily-built, halls and dormitories and even chapels. And when you have sunk so much money in plant and equipment, when you have a very large (though not always well-paid) staff of men who are mostly married and have a few children, when you are turning out from your graduate schools more and

## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

more men who have been trained to become teachers in other universities, and who will probably want to marry and have children too; when your whole national system of higher education is designed for an age of expansion, for a country which is going indefinitely to increase its population, grow rich, and build more universities—then you will find it very difficult to retract.

What happens in America is not so irrelevant to British affairs as it is commonly taken to be. For, as I have already said, what we have to recognize is a crisis of education not in one country but in all, a crisis which has its common features everywhere. What has happened in American universities can happen in provincial universities in England; and what happens in provincial universities exerts influence on what happens in Oxford and Cambridge. We are well advanced in an age of great social changes. I do not object to that; but I think that if we admit that social change inevitably means change in our system of education, in our conceptions of *who* should be educated, and *how*, and of the still more neglected question, *why*, we shall be better able to give intelligent direction, instead of leaving education to take care of itself.

It is against this shifting vast background, very important for my picture, that I would set the question of the place of the classics in modern educa-

## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

tion. We discern three tendencies in education as in politics, the *liberal*, the *radical*, and what I am tempted to call, perhaps simply because it is my own, the *orthodox*. In using these terms about tendencies in education I do not wish to draw any close political parallel, because in politics there is no pure breed of any kind.

The *liberal* attitude towards education is that with which we are the most familiar. It is apt to maintain the apparently unobjectionable view that education is not a mere acquisition of facts, but a training of the mind as an instrument, to deal with any class of facts, to reason, and to apply the training obtained in one department in dealing with new ones. The inference is drawn that one subject is as good, for education, as another; that the student should follow his own bent, and pursue whatever subject happens most to interest him. The student who applies himself to geology, and he who applies himself to languages, may both in the end find themselves in trade: it is assumed that if they both have made the most of their opportunities, and have equal abilities, they will both be equally fitted for their vocation, and for 'life'. I think that the theory that the mind can be trained equally well upon any subject, and that the choice of the class of facts to acquire is indifferent, can be pushed too far. There are two kinds of subject which, at an early stage, provide but poor



## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

training for the mind. One is the subject which is concerned more with theories, and the history of theories, than with the storing of the mind with such information and knowledge as theories are built upon: such a subject, and a very popular one, is *economics*, which consists of a number of complicated and contradictory theories, a subject by no means proved to be a science, usually based on illicit assumptions, the bastard progeny of a parent it disowns, *ethics*. Even *philosophy*, when divorced from *theology* and from the knowledge of life and of ascertainable facts, is but a famishing pabulum, or a draught stimulating for a moment, leaving behind drought and disillusion. The other kind of subject which provides indifferent training is that which is too minute and particular, the relation of which to the general business of living is not made evident. And there is a third subject, equally bad as training, which does not fall into either of these classes, but which is bad for reasons of its own: the study of *English Literature* or, to be more comprehensive, the literature of one's own language.

Another fallacy of liberal education is that the student who advances to the university should take up the study that interests him most. For a small number of students this is in the main right. Even at a very early stage of school life, we can identify a few individuals with a definite inclination towards



## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

one group of studies or another. The danger for these fortunate ones is that if left to themselves they will overspecialize, they will be wholly ignorant of the general interests of human beings. We are all in one way or another naturally lazy, and it is much easier to confine ourselves to the study of subjects in which we excel. But the great majority of the people who are to be educated have no very strong inclination to specialize, because they have no definite gifts or tastes. Those who have more lively and curious minds will tend to smatter. No one can become really educated without having pursued some study in which he took no interest—for it is a part of education to *learn to interest ourselves* in subjects for which we have no aptitude.

The doctrine of studying the subject we like (and for many youths in the process of development this is often only what they like at the moment) is most disastrous for those whose interests lie in the field of modern languages or in that of history, and worst of all for those who fancy that they will become writers. For it is these people—and there are many of them—for whom the deficiency of Latin and Greek is most unfortunate. Those who have a real genius for acquiring these dead languages are few, and they are pretty likely of their own accord to devote themselves to the Classics—if they are given the opportunity. But there are many more of us who have

## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

gifts for modern languages, or for our own language, or for history, who have only a modest capacity for mastering Latin and Greek. We can hardly be expected to realize, during adolescence, that without a foundation of Latin and Greek we remain limited in our power over these other subjects.

Now while *liberalism* committed the folly of pretending that one subject is as good as another for study, and that Latin and Greek are simply *no better* than a great many others, *radicalism* (the offspring of liberalism) discards this attitude of universal toleration and pronounces Latin and Greek to be subjects of little import. Liberalism had excited superficial curiosity. Never before had so much miscellaneous information been made available to everybody, in degrees of simplification adapted to everyone's capacity for assimilation. The entertaining epitomes of Mr. H. G. Wells bear witness in their popularity; new discoveries are made known to the whole world at once; and everyone knows that the universe is expanding or else it is contracting. In dissipated curiosity about such novelties great numbers of people, many of them poor and deserving, think that they are improving their minds, or passing their leisure in a praiseworthy occupation. Radicalism then proceeds to organize the 'vital issues', and reject what is not vital. A modern liter-

## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

ary critic, who has gained considerable publicity by Marxist criticism of literature, has told us that the real men of our time are such as the Lenins, Trotskys, Gorkys and Stalins; also the Einsteins, Plancks and Hunt Morgans. To this critic *knowledge* means 'primarily scientific knowledge of the world about us and of ourselves'. This statement might be given a respectable interpretation; but I am afraid that the critic meant only what the man in the street means. By 'scientific knowledge of the world about us' he does *not* mean understanding of life. By scientific knowledge of ourselves he does *not* mean self-knowledge. In short, while liberalism did not know what it wanted of education, radicalism does know; and it wants the wrong thing.

Radicalism is, however, to be applauded for wanting something. It is to be applauded for wanting to select and eliminate, even if it wants to select and to eliminate the wrong things. If you have a definite ideal for society, then you are right to cultivate what is useful for the development and maintenance of that society, and discourage what is useless and distracting. And we have been too long without an ideal. It is a commonplace nowadays that Russian communism is a religion. Then its rulers must educate the young in the tenets of that religion. I am trying to indicate now the *fundamental* defence of Latin and Greek, not merely give you a



## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

collection of excellent reasons for studying them, reasons which you can think of for yourselves. There are two and only two finally tenable hypotheses about life: the Catholic and the materialistic. The defence of the study of the classical languages must ultimately rest upon their association with the former, as must the defence of the primacy of the contemplative over the active life. To associate the classics with a sentimental Toryism, combination-rooms, classical quotations in the House of Commons, is to give them a flimsy justification, but hardly more flimsy than to defend them by a philosophy of humanism—that is, by a tardy rearguard action which attempts to arrest the progress of liberalism just before the end of its march: an action, besides, which is being fought by troops which are already half liberalized themselves. It is high time that the defence of the classics should be dissociated from objects which, however excellent under certain conditions and in a certain environment, are of only relative importance—a traditional public-school system, a traditional university system, a decaying social order—and permanently associated where they belong, with something permanent: the historical Christian Faith.

I do not ignore the great value which negative and obstructive forces can have. The longer the better schools and the older universities in this



## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

country (for they have pretty well given up the struggle in America) can maintain some standard of classical education, the better for those who look to the future with an active desire for reform and an intelligent acceptance of change. But to expect from our educational institutions any more positive contribution to the future would be vain. As only the Catholic and the communist know, *all* education must be ultimately religious education. I do not mean that education should be confined to postulants for the priesthood or for the higher ranks of Soviet bureaucracy; I mean that the hierarchy of education should be a religious hierarchy. The universities are too far gone in secularization, they have too long lost any common fundamental assumption as to what education is *for*, and they are too big. It might be hoped that they would eventually follow, or else be relegated to preservation as curious architectural remains; but they cannot be expected to lead.

It is quite possible, of course, that the future may bring neither a Christian nor a materialistic civilization. It is quite possible that the future may bring nothing but chaos or torpor. In that event, I am not interested in the future; I am only interested in the two alternatives which seem to me worthy of interest. I am only here concerned with readers who are prepared to prefer a Christian civilization, if a

## MODERN EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICS

choice is forced upon them; and it is only upon readers who wish to see a Christian civilization survive and develop that I am urging the importance of the study of Latin and Greek. If Christianity is not to survive, I shall not mind if the texts of the Latin and Greek languages became more obscure and forgotten than those of the language of the Etruscans. And the only hope that I can see for the study of Latin and Greek, in their proper place and for the right reasons, lies in the revival and expansion of monastic teaching orders. There are other reasons, and of the greatest weight, for desiring to see a revival of the monastic life in its variety, but the maintenance of Christian education is not the least. The first educational task of the communities should be the *preservation* of education within the cloister, uncontaminated by the deluge of barbarism outside; their second, the provision of education for the laity, which should be something more than education for a place in the Civil Service, or for technical efficiency, or for social or public success. It would not be that tawdry adornment, 'education for leisure'. As the world at large becomes more completely secularized, the need becomes more urgent that professedly Christian people should have a Christian education, which should be an education both for this world and for the life of prayer in this world.

## IN MEMORIAM

Tennyson is a great poet, for reasons that are perfectly clear. He has three qualities which are seldom found together except in the greatest poets: abundance, variety, and complete competence. We therefore cannot appreciate his work unless we read a good deal of it. We may not admire his aims: but whatever he sets out to do, he succeeds in doing, with a mastery which gives us the sense of confidence that is one of the major pleasures of poetry. His variety of metrical accomplishment is astonishing. Without making the mistake of trying to write Latin verse in English, he knew everything about Latin versification that an English poet could use; and he said of himself that he thought he knew the quantity of the sounds of every English word except perhaps *scissors*. He had the finest ear of any English poet since Milton. He was the master of Swinburne; and the versification of Swinburne, himself a classical scholar, is often crude and sometimes cheap,

## IN MEMORIAM

in comparison with Tennyson's. Tennyson extended very widely the range of active metrical forms in English: in *Maud* alone the variety is prodigious. But innovation in metric is not to be measured solely by the width of the deviation from accepted practice. It is a matter of the historical situation: at some moments a more violent change may be necessary than at others. The problem differs at every period. At some times, a violent revolution may be neither possible nor desirable; at such times, a change which may appear very slight, is the change which the important poet will make. The innovation of Pope, after Dryden, may not seem very great; but it is the mark of the master to be able to make small changes which will be highly significant, as at another time to make radical changes, through which poetry will curve back again to its norm.

There is an early poem, only published in the official biography, which already exhibits Tennyson as a master. According to a note, Tennyson later expressed regret that he had removed the poem from his *Juvenilia*; it is a fragmentary *Hesperides*, in which only the 'Song of the Three Sisters' is complete. The poem illustrates Tennyson's classical learning and his mastery of metre. The first stanza of 'The Song of the Three Sisters' is as follows:



## IN MEMORIAM

*The Golden Apple, the Golden Apple, the hallow'd  
fruit,  
Guard it well, guard it warily,  
Singing airily,  
Standing about the charmed root.  
Round about all is mute,  
As the snowfield on the mountain peaks,  
As the sandfield at the mountain foot.  
Crocodiles in briny creeks  
Sleep and stir not; all is mute.  
If ye sing not, if ye make false measure,  
We shall lose eternal pleasure,  
Worth eternal want of rest.  
Laugh not loudly: watch the treasure  
Of the wisdom of the West.  
In a corner wisdom whispers. Five and three  
(Let it not be preach'd abroad) make an awful mystery:  
For the blossom unto threefold music bloweth;  
Evermore it is born anew,  
And the sap in threefold music floweth,  
From the root,  
Drawn in the dark,  
Up to the fruit,  
Creeping under the fragrant bark,  
Liquid gold, honeysweet through and through.  
Keen-eyed Sisters, singing airily,  
Looking warily  
Every way,*

## IN MEMORIAM

*Guard the apple night and day,  
Lest one from the East come and take it away.*

A young man who can write like that has not much to learn about metric; and the young man who wrote these lines somewhere between 1828 and 1830 was doing something new. There is something not derived from any of his predecessors. In some of Tennyson's early verse the influence of Keats is visible—in songs and in blank verse; and less successfully, there is the influence of Wordsworth, as in *Dora*. But in the lines I have just quoted, and in the two Mariana poems, *The Sea-Fairies*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *The Lady of Shalott* and elsewhere, there is something wholly new.

*All day within the dreamy house,  
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;  
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse  
Behind the mouldering wainscoat shriek'd,  
Or from the crevice peer'd about.*

*The blue fly sung in the pane* (the line would be ruined if you substituted *sang* for *sung*) is enough to tell us that something important has happened.

The reading of long poems is not nowadays much practised: in the age of Tennyson it appears to have been easier. For a good many long poems were not only written but widely circulated; and the level

## IN MEMORIAM

was high: even the second-rate long poems of that time, like *The Light of Asia*, are better worth reading than most long modern novels. But Tennyson's long poems are not long poems in quite the same sense as those of his contemporaries. They are very different in kind from *Sordello* or *The Ring and the Book*, to name the greatest by the greatest of his contemporary poets. *Maud* and *In Memoriam* are each a series of poems, given form by the greatest lyrical resourcefulness that a poet has ever shown. The *Idylls of the King* have merits and defects similar to those of *The Princess*. An *idyll* is a 'short poem descriptive of some picturesque scene or incident'; in choosing the name Tennyson perhaps showed an appreciation of his limitations. For his poems are always descriptive, and always picturesque; they are never really narrative. The *Idylls of the King* are no different in kind from some of his early poems; the *Morte d'Arthur* is in fact an early poem. *The Princess* is still an *idyll*, but an *idyll* that is too long. Tennyson's versification in this poem is as masterly as elsewhere: it is a poem which we must read, but which we excuse ourselves from reading twice. And it is worth while recognizing the reason why we return again and again, and are always stirred by the lyrics which intersperse it, and which are among the greatest of all poetry of their kind, and yet avoid the poem itself. It is not, as we may think while reading, the outmoded

## IN MEMORIAM

attitude towards the relations of the sexes, the exasperating views on the subjects of matrimony, celibacy and female education, that make us recoil from *The Princess*.<sup>1</sup> We can swallow the most antipathetic doctrines if we are given an exciting narrative. But for narrative Tennyson had no gift at all. For a static poem, and a moving poem, on the same subject, you have only to compare his *Ulysses* with the condensed and intensely exciting narrative of that hero in the XXVIth Canto of Dante's *Inferno*. Dante is telling a story. Tennyson is only stating an elegiac mood. The very greatest poets set before you real men talking, carry you on in real events moving. Tennyson could not tell a story at all. It is not that in *The Princess* he tries to tell a story and failed: it is rather that an idyll protracted to such length becomes unreadable. So *The Princess* is a dull poem; one of the poems of which we may say, that they are beautiful but dull.

But in *Maud* and in *In Memoriam*, Tennyson is doing what every conscious artist does, turning his limitations to good purpose. Of the content of *Maud*, I cannot think so highly as does Mr. Humbert

<sup>1</sup> For a revelation of the Victorian mind on these matters, and of opinions to which Tennyson would probably have subscribed, see the Introduction by Sir Edward Strachey, Bt., to his emasculated edition of the *Morte D'Arthur* of Malory, still current. Sir Edward admired the *Idylls of the King*.



## IN MEMORIAM

Wolfe, in his interesting essay on Tennyson which is largely a defence of the supremacy of that poem. For me, *Maud* consists of a few very beautiful lyrics, such as *O let the solid ground*, *Birds in the high Hall-garden*, and *Go not, happy day*, around which the semblance of a dramatic situation has been constructed with the greatest metrical virtuosity. The whole situation is unreal; the ravings of the lover on the edge of insanity sound false, and fail, as do the bellicose bellowings, to make one's flesh creep with sincerity. It would be foolish to suggest that Tennyson ought to have gone through some experience similar to that described: for a poet with dramatic gifts, a situation quite remote from his personal experience may release the strongest emotion. And I do not believe for a moment that Tennyson was a man of mild feelings or weak passions. There is no evidence in his poetry that he knew the experience of violent passion for a woman; but there is plenty of evidence of emotional intensity and violence—but of emotion so deeply suppressed, even from himself, as to tend rather towards the blackest melancholia than towards dramatic action. And it is emotion which, so far as my reading of the poems can discover, attained no ultimate clear purgation. I should reproach Tennyson not for mildness, or tepidity, but rather for lack of serenity.

## IN MEMORIAM

*Of love that never found his earthly close,  
What sequel?*

The fury of *Maud* is shrill rather than deep, though one feels in every passage what exquisite adaptation of metre to the mood Tennyson is attempting to express. I think that the effect of feeble violence, which the poem as a whole produces, is the result of a fundamental error of form. A poet can express his feelings as fully through a dramatic, as through a lyrical form; but *Maud* is neither one thing nor the other: just as *The Princess* is more than an idyll, and less than a narrative. In *Maud*, Tennyson neither identifies himself with the lover, nor identifies the lover with himself: consequently, the real feelings of Tennyson, profound and tumultuous as they are, never arrive at expression.

It is, in my opinion, in *In Memoriam*, that Tennyson finds full expression. Its technical merit alone is enough to ensure its perpetuity. While Tennyson's technical competence is everywhere masterly and satisfying, *In Memoriam* is the less unapproachable of all his poems. Here are one hundred and thirty-two passages, each of several quatrains in the same form, and never monotony or repetition. And the poem has to be comprehended as a whole. We may not memorize a few passages, we cannot find a 'fair sample'; we have to comprehend the whole of a

## IN MEMORIAM

poem which is essentially the length that it is. We may choose to remember:

*Dark house, by which once more I stand  
Here in the long unlovely street,  
Doors, where my heart was used to beat  
So quickly, waiting for a hand,*

*A hand that can be clasp'd no more——  
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,  
And like a guilty thing I creep  
At earliest morning to the door.*

*He is not here: but far away  
The noise of life begins again,  
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain  
On the bald street breaks the blank day.*

This is great poetry, economical of words, a universal emotion in what could only be an English town: and it gives me the shudder that I fail to get from anything in *Maud*. But such a passage, by itself, is not *In Memoriam*: *In Memoriam* is the whole poem. It is unique: it is a long poem made by putting together lyrics, which have only the unity and continuity of a diary, the concentrated diary of a man confessing himself. It is a diary of which we have to read every word.

Apparently Tennyson's contemporaries, once they had accepted *In Memoriam*, regarded it as a



## IN MEMORIAM

message of hope and reassurance to their rather fading Christian faith. It happens now and then that a poet by some strange accident expresses the mood of his generation, at the same time that he is expressing a mood of his own which is quite remote from that of his generation. This is not a question of insincerity: there is an amalgam of yielding and opposition below the level of consciousness. Tennyson himself, on the conscious level of the man who talks to reporters and poses for photographers, to judge from remarks made in conversation and recorded in his son's *Memoir*, consistently asserted a convinced, if somewhat sketchy, Christian belief. And he was a friend of Frederick Denison Maurice—nothing seems odder about that age than the respect which its eminent people felt for each other. Nevertheless, I get a very different impression from *In Memoriam* from that which Tennyson's contemporaries seem to have got. It is of a very much more interesting and tragic Tennyson. His biographers have not failed to remark that he had a good deal of the temperament of the mystic—certainly not at all the mind of the theologian. He was desperately anxious to hold the faith of the believer, without being very clear about what he wanted to believe: he was capable of illumination which he was incapable of understanding. The 'Strong Son of God, immortal Love', with an in-



## IN MEMORIAM

vocation of whom the poem opens, has only a hazy connexion with the Logos, or the Incarnate God. Tennyson is distressed by the idea of a mechanical universe; he is naturally, in lamenting his friend, teased by the hope of immortality and reunion beyond death. Yet the renewal craved for seems at best but a continuance, or a substitute for the joys of friendship upon earth. His desire for immortality never is quite the desire for Eternal Life; his concern is for the loss of man rather than for the gain of God.

*shall he,*  
*Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,*  
*Such splendid purpose in his eyes,*  
*Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,*  
*Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,*  
*Who trusted God was love indeed,*  
*And love Creation's final law——*  
*Though Nature, red in tooth and claw*  
*With ravine shriek'd against his creed——*  
*Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills.*  
*Who battled for the True, the Just,*  
*Be blown about the desert dust,*  
*Or seal'd within the iron hills?*

That strange abstraction, 'Nature', becomes a real god or goddess, perhaps more real, at moments, to Tennyson than God (*'Are God and Nature then at*

## IN MEMORIAM

*strife?*'). The hope of immortality is confused (typically of the period) with the hope of the gradual and steady improvement of this world. Much has been said of Tennyson's interest in contemporary science, and of the impression of Darwin. *In Memoriam*, in any case, antedates *The Origin of Species* by several years, and the belief in social progress by democracy antedates it by many more; and I suspect that the faith of Tennyson's age in human progress would have been quite as strong even had the discoveries of Darwin been postponed by fifty years. And after all, there is no logical connexion: the belief in progress being current already, the discoveries of Darwin were harnessed to it:

*No longer half-akin to brute,  
For all we thought, and loved and did  
And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed  
Of what in them is flower and fruit;*

*Whereof the man, that with me trod  
This planet, was a noble type  
Appearing ere the times were ripe,  
That friend of mine who lives in God,*

*That God, which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.*

## IN MEMORIAM

These lines show an interesting compromise between the religious attitude and, what is quite a different thing, the belief in human perfectibility; but the contrast was not so apparent to Tennyson's contemporaries. They may have been taken in by it, but I don't think that Tennyson himself was, quite: his feelings were more honest than his mind. There is evidence elsewhere—even in an early poem, *Locksley Hall*, for example—that Tennyson by no means regarded with complacency all the changes that were going on about him in the progress of industrialism and the rise of the mercantile and manufacturing and banking classes; and he may have contemplated the future of England, as his years drew out, with increasing gloom. Temperamentally, he was opposed to the doctrine that he was moved to accept and to praise.<sup>1</sup>

Tennyson's feelings, I have said, were honest; but they were usually a good way below the surface. *In Memoriam* can, I think, justly be called a religious poem, but for another reason than that which made it seem religious to his contemporaries. It is not religious because of the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt. Its faith is a poor thing, but its doubt is a very intense experience. *In Memoriam* is a poem of despair, but of despair of a religious kind. And to qualify its despair with the

<sup>1</sup> See, in Harold Nicolson's admirable *Tennyson*, p. 252 ff.

## IN MEMORIAM

adjective 'religious' is to elevate it above most of its derivatives. For *The City of Dreadful Night*, and the *Shropshire Lad*, and the poems of Thomas Hardy, are small work in comparison with *In Memoriam*: it is greater than they and comprehends them.<sup>1</sup>

In ending we must go back to the beginning and remember that *In Memoriam* would not be a great poem, or Tennyson a great poet, without the technical accomplishment. Tennyson is the great master of metric as well as of melancholia; I do not think any poet in English has ever had a finer ear for vowel sound, as well as a subtler feeling for some moods of anguish:

*Dear as remember'd kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd  
On lips that are for others; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret.*

And this technical gift of Tennyson's is no slight thing. Tennyson lived in a time which was already acutely time-conscious: a great many things seemed to be happening, railways were being built, discoveries were being made, the face of the world was

<sup>1</sup> There are other kinds of despair. Davidson's great poem, *Thirty Bob a Week*, is not derivative from Tennyson. On the other hand, there are other things derivative from Tennyson besides *Atalanta in Calydon*. Compare the poems of William Morris with *The Voyage of Maeldune*, and *Barrack Room Ballads* with several of Tennyson's later poems.



## IN MEMORIAM

changing. That was a time busy in keeping up to date. It had, for the most part, no hold on permanent things, on permanent truths about man and god and life and death. The surface of Tennyson stirred about with his time; and he had nothing to which to hold fast except his unique and unerring feeling for the sounds of words. But in this he had something that no one else had. Tennyson's surface, his technical accomplishment, is intimate with his depths: what we most quickly see about Tennyson is that which moves between the surface and the depths, that which is of slight importance. By looking innocently at the surface we are most likely to come to the depths, to the abyss of sorrow. Tennyson is not only a minor Virgil, he is also with Virgil as Dante saw him, a Virgil among the Shades, the saddest of all English poets, among the Great in Limbo, the most instinctive rebel against the society in which he was the most perfect conformist.

Tennyson seems to have reached the end of his spiritual development with *In Memoriam*; there followed no reconciliation, no resolution.

*And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,  
No choral salutation lure to light  
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night,*

or rather with twilight, for Tennyson faced neither the darkness nor the light, in his later years. The

## IN MEMORIAM

genius, the technical power, persisted to the end, but the spirit had surrendered. A gloomier end than that of Baudelaire: Tennyson had no *singulier avertissement*. And having turned aside from the journey through the dark night, to become the surface flatterer of his own time, he has been rewarded with the despite of an age that succeeds his own in shallowness.

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